Gift of
McCown Family
In Memory of
C. C. McCown

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
RELIGION

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/proseplays0000unse_r3d9

Prose Plays

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF RELIGION

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK . BOSTON . CHICAGO . DALLAS
ATLANTA . SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON . BOMBAY . CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

Prose Plays

By

John Masefield

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF RELIGION

New York
The Macmillan Company
1925

All rights reserved

GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL UNION
LIBRARY
1962

64768
B 2503
M377p
PR
6025
A77
P82
1925

Copyright, 1914
By THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

Copyright, 1909, 1910, 1914, 1915, 1916, 1918, 1922, 1925
By JOHN MASEFIELD

New Collected Edition in four volumes

Set up and electrotyped. Published December, 1925

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
BY THE BERWICK AND SMITH COMPANY

INTRODUCTION

I have been asked to write a few words as a preface to these volumes of plays. To a story teller, interested in all ways of the telling of tales, a play is nothing but a story in its simplest form. It is simply the clash of human will with other human will or with fate. It is certain always to attract a story teller, because it demands a passionate fable and characters in clash. To practise the intense condensation necessary in dramatic writing, to reduce a fable to its simplest terms and keep it simple and poignant for an hour or two hours, is helpful exercise to any story teller.

So in these plays my interest has been that of a craftsman working for a greater simplicity. In my earliest plays I took fables still in popular memory in countrysides well known to me. Having written these, I took a subject which had profound consequences in history, thinking that no matter how lamentably I failed at the task, I should at least grow by striving to do the difficult. In the next play I took one of the great stories of the world and endeavoured to present it simply and poignantly, so that it might mean as much to us as to those among whom the events took place two hundred years ago. In later plays I have tried to attain compression in the conduct of the action with external decorations of lyrical or narrative verse, to be spoken or sung. It must always be helpful to a writer in a century of books when work is read, to work for a time at things designed to appear in living forms and to be spoken with the voices of men and women directly to audiences.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

Oxford, 1925

CONTENTS

	PAGE
The Campden Wonder	3
Mrs. Harrison	31
The Sweeps of Ninety-Eight	45
The Locked Chest	61
The Tragedy of Nan	101
The Tragedy of Pompey the Great	176
The Faithful	255
Melloney Holtspur	351

PREFACE

The first of the plays in this volume, *The Campden Wonder*, was written at Greenwich, near London, at the end of 1905 and beginning of 1906. I had heard the fable of it, The Campden Wonder, in Chipping Campden, in Gloucestershire (where the events happened, or are said to have happened) some years before, while staying there with friends. I had wished, at that time, to write a play upon the subject, and to have it acted in Campden, with other plays founded on the events in that countryside. This scheme came to nothing. In those years many people were dramatizing the events of their cities and districts. There were pageants at Romsey, Winchester, Oxford, Bury and other places. I had hoped that the larger villages might follow the example of the towns. *The Campden Wonder* was produced at the Court Theatre in London in 1907.

Mrs. Harrison, *The Sweeps of Ninety-Eight* and *The Locked Chest* were written at Greenwich in 1906. The fable of *Mrs. Harrison* is a part of the fable of *The Campden Wonder*. It can be found in one of the two pamphlets which preserve the story of the Wonder. *The Sweeps* is an invention, though some of the characters, Major Sirr, and Thomas Judkin Fitzpatrick once lived, and used some of the words allotted to them. The fable of *The Locked Chest* is taken from the Laxdale Saga. All these plays have been acted, the second and third many times.

After I had finished *The Locked Chest*, I wished to try a longer play. A friend in London told me of a case of miscarriage of justice which had happened in Kent early in the last century. I took this as the groundwork of my fable for *The Tragedy of Nan*. I added some inventions to the fable, such as an unhappy love affair, and the characters of the household. I began the play in January and finished it in September, 1907, at Greenwich.

When I was finishing *Nan* I worked at a one-act play upon *The Death of Pompey the Great*, as described in the life of Pompey in North's *Plutarch*. The tragedy of Pompey seemed to be too big a subject for a one-act play, so I left the draft and began anew on fuller lines. I wrote the first act of the play in 1908 in London and the second and third acts in 1909 at Great Hampden.

My next play was *The Faithful*, a pageant showing the tragedy of the 47 Ronin of Japan. This play was begun at Hampstead in January and finished at Great Hampden in May, 1913. I had known the story of The Ronin for many years, and had long hoped to make a play of it, but could not see a dramatic form for it. I planned it and began to write it (in 1912) as a tale in verse, but changed my mind on seeing Mr. Granville Barker's productions of *Twelfth Night* and *The Winter's Tale*. They shewed me more clearly than any stage productions known to me the power and sweep of Shakespeare's construction of "scene undivided and passion unlimited." They helped me to construct *The Faithful* as a play with "continuous performance" for a double or platform stage.

After finishing *The Faithful*, I began the verse play, in one act, of *Philip the King*, about January, 1914. Soon afterwards I began a second one-act play in verse, on the subject of Good Friday. Both of these plays were begun at Hampstead. *Philip* was finished at Lollingdon in May of that fatal year. *Good Friday* was interrupted by the war and never completed. I had hoped in a rewriting to make the play a clash between Christ and the High Priest. This was one of the many millions of human hopes destroyed in that year.

I was a playwright, according to my power, for ten years, during which the theatre in England was the main interest of my fellows and myself. We did not do what we hoped to do (the war stopped that), but we had good fun in trying, and the sport of the effort, mixed up, as it was, with the beauty of youth and the depth of friendship, seems now some of the salt of my

life. These plays belong to the days of before the war. What may come after the war is still unsure; but while we are men we have hope, that what comes after us will be better. I hope still to see in England a theatre where playwrights will be doing easily and well, and as a matter of course, the plays which we saw in our dreams, in those old days when we thought the censor a hardship.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

THE CAMPDEN WONDER

THE CAMPDEN WONDER

PERSONS

	PLAYED BY
JOHN PERRY	*Mr. Norman McKinnel*
DICK PERRY	*Mr. H. R. Hignett*
PARSON	*Mr. Edmund Gurney*
TOM CONSTABLE	*Mr. Norman Page*
MRS. PERRY (JOAN)	*Miss Carlotta Addison*
MRS. HARRISON	*Miss Dolores Drummond*

This play was produced at the Court Theatre, in London, on the 8th of January, 1907, under the direction of Mr. H. Granville Barker.

THE CAMPDEN WONDER

Scene I

Scene. *Harrison's Kitchen in Campden.*

Joan Be the master come home from Charringworth yet?

Dick: I an't heard him, I an't.

Joan: He be gone a great while. It's near ten.

Dick: [*Going to the door.*] Be you there, Master?—No, a ben't come home yet, Mother.

Joan: Why, whatever have a kept 'en. If that ben't ten a striking!

Dick: Old Mr. Curtis, he've a harvest feast to-night. Her'll have stopped with old Mr. Curtis, Mother. Her'll sleep there after veast, in the barn, I do think.

Joan: [*Laughing.*] He be a good one, he be. Seventy year old he be—And her do drink, her do, and her do sing. Law! how a do sing, to be sure; and a do like a's ale.

Dick: Her be a good old soul—A old ram, he be. Lor, now, to think on the merry deeds of him, the old sinful soul. Only last year now—him away so sly now, like a old fox. They said a was killed for sure; and there a were to Gloucester surely, a drinking, a drinking merry, and him his three-score and ten!

Joan: Her be a merry old soul. Her be a trusty good soul—And a be a good master. Her've done right by thee, Dick.

Dick: Her did say this noon, I should have twelve shillin' a week after Michaelmas. That's more than brother John gets.

JOAN: Ah, to think of that now! More than thy brother John! Thy brother John—he be a strange one, he be. I do fear I'll live to see thy brother John hanged! He be earnin' nine shillin' a week, and he drink that, he do.—And he be a handsome lad, Dick, a fine grown lad, John be. He be like his feyther was.

DICK: I do think as how a should do summat for you, Mother, and not go a-drinking all he do earn.

JOAN: He be a handsome lad, Dick, thy brother John. A dear, a dear, he be the very spit of his poor feyther, and he be a sad one, he be; and he do drink all his nine shillin.'

[*Enter* JOHN]

JOHN: Who do drink all his nine shillin'?

JOAN: Ah, John! there thou be, lad. You be late out, John.

JOHN: You were talking about me, you were. You were saying as I drank—you and Dick there. He be a godly one, brother Dick be. [*To Dick.*] You keep your tongue shut about me, and about my nine shillin'. If I do drink it, I drink it open. I ben't one to go knucklin' to pa'son, I ben't. Nor I don't go knucklin' to my lord, like some I know.

JOAN: There, there, John. Don't 'ee take on, now!

DICK: It would be better, I do think, if as how you did go knucklin', as you call it, stead of swillin' like a beast up to beer-house.

JOAN: There, there, Dick, lad, don't 'ee go for to mad him. Speak un fair, lad—thy elder brother he be.

JOHN: [*Mimicking.*] Ah! speak un fair—You shut your head, Mother. I be good enough to stand up to Dick, I be. Who goes swillin' like a beast?

DICK: You do. They be fair shamed to speak to us, neigh-

bours be. They be a drunken lot, them Perrys, they say—"Ah," they say, "I see John Perry over to Aston. He were asleep in the ditch, the drunken sot!"

JOHN: Who say?

DICK: Parson say, and Farmer Hill say, and thy poor Mother say, and I say too, if they ben't good enough.

JOHN: Let un say! You be a lot of old puts, all on you—You leave I, I advise thee. I won't take no preachin' from you. You be a old put, and Mother be.

DICK: Rather be a old put, than rotten fruit, you drunken dog, you!

JOHN: I ben't no drunken dog.

DICK: You be.

JOAN: Ah! Don't 'ee mad un now, Dick.

JOHN: Better be a drunken dog than a knuckler to Pa'son. You was always the good one, you was. You was like the good boy in the Bible, you always was. You was born to tread on my corns, you was, you closhy put.

DICK: I ben't no closhy put.

JOHN: You've crossed I long enough, Master Dick. You cross I no more, or I'll give you a cross 'll set thee i' the muck.

DICK: I don't cross thee, John, nor I never done.

JOHN: You be a liar! Wan't you a gettin' sixpence when I were a gettin' nought? Wan't it you got the hat give you? Wan't it you got Master's coat with the red trimmings? And I got nought. You with your pretty face, you grinning pinkanye! Wan't you a gettin' eight shillin' when I were a gettin' but seven? And I your elder, and your better.

DICK: You be my elder, but you ben't my better. If I got eight shillin' an' you seven, it's because I didn't go swillin' over to Aston. I didn't get drunk, I didn't.

JOHN: No, nor you hadn't got the soul in you, you mean. Then you comes a sucking and a trucking to Master Harrison—"Ah!" you says, "ben't I a godly one? Ben't I proper and godly?" "Ah!" you says—So you get took to be his servant. Wan't that a cross to me? Wan't I enough servant to him? I didn't want no knucklin' sniveller helping me. You call that not crossing, don't you? Ah!

JOAN: Now ha' done, John, ha' done. Don't 'ee mind thy brother Dick, John.

JOHN: But I will mind him, I tell 'ee. He have crossed me since we wern't that high. Ah! you dog, you. I be a drunken one, be I? You must get more than I get, must you? And my lady'll speak to you. "Good mornin', Perry," she'll say, "Oh! what beautiful weather." "Good evenin', Dick," she'll say, "You ben't no sot, you ben't. You ben't like your brother John."—No, no, you be a innocent lamb, you be; but you be warned! You have done of your crossing me—you dear sweet suckin' innocent lamb. You was him got sore knees from praying, you was, you dog of dogtown!

JOAN: Ah! John dear, do a done!

DICK: Now, don't you go calling names, John Perry. I'll tell you what you are. You're a disgrace; you'll come to a bad end. I never crossed you, and you know it. It's true I'm getting more than you. After Michaelmas I'll be getting more still. I'll be getting twelve shilling a week. If you'd do more, and drink less, you'd be getting the same.

JOHN: If I'd do more! Don't you preach to me. What's the good of doing more, with you stepping in over my head. Twelve shilling a week you're going to have, are you? You are not.

You think yourself high in the world. You think you're a clever one. You think you'll do better than your brother. You will not. Not with me here. High in the world you think yourself with your twelve shilling. I'll bring you low—I'll bring you lower than the lowest.

DICK: It'll take a soberer man than you to do it.

JOHN: What'll it take?

JOAN: A dear! A dear! That ever I should see the day! Go home, Dick lad, you're only angering your brother.

JOHN: Lower than the lowest, I'll bring you. You shall drag in the dirt, you and your twelve shillin'!

DICK: I tell you it'll take a soberer man than you. Go home, man. Get someone to pump on you. You need sobering. I wonder you're not ashamed to talk that way afore your mother!

JOHN: Don't learn me my duty, you Noll Crumwell's man, you Dicky Kill King!

DICK: What am I?

JOHN: A canting put. That's what you are—and a dog—A dirty twelve shilling sneck up of a Ledbury lawyer; but you mark me, I'll bring you down!

DICK: Go home and sleep it off, man. I'm sick of hearing you.

JOHN: What? What? Sick, are you? I'll make you sicker. [*He flies at Dick: and grapples with him.*]

JOAN: [*Running to door.*] Help! Help! Mrs. Harrison!

[*Enter* MRS. HARRISON]

MRS. H.: Lord save us, and spare us! Good God, be good to us! Why, what's all this? Lord God's my mercy; why, Dick, why, John! John, what are you doing here? I thought I forbid you my kitchen. Dick, I'm ashamed of you! As for you, John,

a gaol's the best place for you. Dick, I'm ashamed of you, fighting in your Master's kitchen, and with your own brother! You'd ought to be ashamed of yourself! It was enough to turn all the beer in the cellar, the noise you were making.

DICK: He began it, mum!

JOHN: You be a liar.

JOAN: Remember your duty.

MRS. H.: Now say a word more, John Perry, and I'll have you bound over. As for you, Dick, I'll tell your Master. Has your Master come in yet?

DICK: No 'm. Us haven't heard him.

MRS. H.: Lord God, be good to a sinful woman. If I havn't enough to bear! It's not enough that I have my house made a common bawdy house. Like a den of thieves it was, the noise you were making; and my man must go boozing till I don't know what hour.—It'll be another of this gallivaunts—I'll give him harvesting when comes in. Go saddle the mare, one of you, and go to Charringworth and bring him back with you.

JOHN: [*Rising.*] I'll go, give me the lantern, Mother.

DICK: You set down, John Perry. You ain't fit to bring any one home.

JOHN: Give I the lantern. [*To* DICK] I'll give you a bloody head if you orders me.

DICK: Set down, when you're told. Give me that light.

JOHN: No, you don't! Stand back. Would you? Take that! [*he hits him.*]

JOAN: Ah, Lord! Ah, Lord! Don't 'ee, Dick, lad.

MRS. H.: Now, John John Perry—Lord God's my hope and mercy. There'll be bloody adultery done. What, John, I say!

JOHN: I'll learn 'ee.

DICK: Let go of my throat, or I'll hit 'ee one.

JOAN: Ah dear! Ah dear! Oh, do 'ee.

MRS. H.: [*Snatching a cider mug and dashing cider into* JOHN'S *face—the fighters separate.*] Lord God's my hope and mercy! If I'm not all of a tremble—all of a tremble you've made me. And the cider all over my new taffety! Lord God's my witness, there might have been murder done. Get you out of this, John Perry. I do believe, John, as you'd do murder. Get you out of this. Never you darken these doors again. I believe as you'd cut my husband's throat—Lord Jesus have mercy! for what he had on him. Saddle the mare, Dick. You're the only one of the two I can trust. Saddle the mare, Dick. Where's my bottle of cordials?

[*Exit*]

DICK: I knowed how it would be—and I get disgraced because you go swilling beer, and come here drunk. Give us the lantern. [*He lights it. John glowers at him.*]

JOAN: Ah dear! ah dear! Ah, Dick, I do wish thee wouldn't mad thy brother. Ah dear! Ah dear! He be that like his poor feyther.

DICK: [*Taking harness down.*] You're a disgrace, you are. You're a disgrace to Campden—you're a disgrace to your mother. You make us shamed. Ugh, you drunkard!

[*Exit Dick with Harness and Lantern:* JOHN *glowers after him.*]

JOAN: [*In a quavering voice.*] Ah dear, ah dear. I be getting old. It ben't like it were. There be none to comfort me now my man is taken. If thy poor feyther were alive now! Ah, John dear, don't 'ee mind thy brother Dick. Ah dear, he do mad thee, that he do. He do vex thee sore. Ah dear! I must

be getting home.—It be late. Don't 'ee mind thy brother Dick, John.

JOHN: I'll mind my brother Dick. [*She goes out slowly after waiting a moment.* JOHN *glowers after her.*]

JOHN: [*Slowly.*] Old Harrison be out late. They think he be gone away boozing, but he ben't. Only I know where old Harrison be gone. [*A pause.*] Twelve shillin' a week you be gettin'. Twelve shillin' a week, and I nought but nine. [*The mare's hoofs sound outside.*] Ah, ha, ha! I'll do it—That's what I'll do.

[*Re-Enter* JOAN]

JOHN: I'll drag him lower than the low, him and his twelve shillin'.

JOAN: Do 'ee come, John. I be all of a shake.

JOHN: [*Going.*] Lower than the dirt, I'll drag him.

CURTAIN

[*The Curtain rises again immediately*]

SCENE II

SCENE: *The same.* MRS. HARRISON AND THE PARSON. (DICK PERRY, *within, singing, and* JOAN *joining in the chorus, heard faintly.*)

PARSON: Come, come, Mrs. Harrison, bear a good heart! Come, don't take on so. Your husband's only—only gone to see a friend. He'll be back to dinner, I daresay.

MRS. H.: Not with the friends he goes to see, no. Oh, if I haven't much to bear.

PARSON: O, but, Mrs. Harrison, come now, go in and take some breakfast. Why, your husband's well enough. Think, think of last year, what a turn he gave us. No one would hurt Mr. Harrison. It's absurd. Anyone would think he had been murdered.

MRS. H: Murdered—ah! There's some comfort in a corpse. There's satisfaction in a body. I was saying that to Mrs. Murrell. "If one has the body," I said, "one knows one has done one's duty by it." One knows that it's all for the best, and then there's the funeral. O dear, O dear—my man lying drunk in a ditch! It's his beer again—Beer, beer, beer. It's his ruin. O, if I had you here, William Harrison! O, a corpse would be a mercy compared to this. And half of my lady's corn not cut, and the reapers saying they must have another penny a day. O, William Harrison! Man is a trial, and a rod of affliction. It's a gnashing of teeth you've been to me.

PARSON: Why, my good Mrs. Harrison, this'll never do. Why, here's John Perry back. Come, John, you've brought good news, I'm sure. Come, Mrs. Harrison, here's John back. Well, John, have you found Mr. Harrison? Where was he?

JOHN: No, nor won't find him—Neither you nor no one.

PARSON: John!

JOHN: Neither you nor no one.

MRS. H.: There, now! If he hasn't been at the drink again. I smell it on him from here—like an empty cider cask. I think I've enough to bear without you getting drunk, John Perry.

JOHN: You have enough to bear—that's true.

PARSON: What do you mean, John, man? He's not drunk, Mrs. Harrison. What is it? What has happened?

MRS. H.: You don't mean to say he was seen with Mrs. Emsworth? I'm—

PARSON: Hush, Mrs. Harrison—we are all in God's hand. Speak John. Tell us! Speak, man, can't you?

JOHN: I want my words took down.

[THE PARSON *looks hard at him*]

MRS. H.: Is it as bad as that? He's been seen with the scarlet woman! He's been sitting on the seven hills. I know it. O dear, O dear, drinking the wine of wrath.

PARSON: Hush, Mrs. Harrison. [*He sits down to ink and paper.*] Now, John, tell us all you have to say. Mrs. Harrison, we are but children, we must submit to Providence. We are here to declare the glory of God, not to cry over our little hurts. If Providence has taken your husband, you should rejoice. Now, John, speak, tell us everything. Come, Mrs. Harrison.

[*The voices of* DICK *and* JOAN *within, singing*]

JOHN: I ben't going to tell my words, till there be witnesses. I want Tom Constable, and I want Mother here, and brother Dick. I got Tom Constable, outside. I brought 'en special.

PARSON: [*Going to door.*] Mrs. Perry! Dick! Is Tom Constable, outside there still, or has he gone home?

DICK: [*Within.*] He be here, sir.

PARSON: Just ask him to step inside, and will you come in too, both of you?

[*Enter* DICK, JOAN AND TOM CONSTABLE]

Stand at the door, Tom, and attend to what is said.

TOM: I will, sir.

PARSON: [*Aside.*] Mrs. Perry, just get out the cordials, and set them by Mrs. Harrison. I'm afraid she may swoon. [*She does so.*] I want you all to attend to what John, there, has to say. Now, John, tell all you know.

JOHN: I ben't going to tell my words, not till I had my book-oath took.

PARSON. Lay your hand on this testament.

JOHN: [*Putting hand on testament.*] I be going to testify.

[*A pause*]

JOHN: I be going to testify. [*Glowering at* MRS. HARRISON.] Mrs. Harrison, thee'd best drink a drop—I got awful news. I got awful news. Mr. Harrison be dead.

PARSON: Be patient, Mrs. Harrison, hear all. How dead?

JOHN: Murdered dead.

ALL: What?

JOHN: Murdered dead!

PARSON: [*Standing up.*] We are but children, Mrs. Harrison. Whom God loveth he chasteneth. How was he murdered, John?

JOHN: I be going to testify. I want my words took down. [PARSON *takes pen.*]—It was us murdered Mr. Harrison.

ALL: What, what, what d'ye mean?

JOHN: It was I, and Mother, and Dick there, murdered Mr. Harrison.

DICK: You—liar!

JOAN: Be you gone mad, John?

PARSON: Have a care what you say, John Perry.

JOHN: For his gold we murdered him.

MRS. H.: I don't believe a word you're saying—[*Weeps.*]

JOHN: For his gold we murdered him.

DICK: I wonder God don't strike thee dead, John.

JOAN: John have gone crazed, sir. It be the sun—he were in the sun afore he took food this morning. Do 'ee sit, John. Us'll bathe thy poor head for 'ee.

JOHN: We murdered en dead for his gold. For his gold we murdered en—didn't us, Dick?

DICK: Mr. . . . Sir! God have afflicted my poor brother—He don't know what he say.

JOHN: I know what I say, I do. And you do. It lie black on my breast—It was your bloody mind planned it.

MRS. H.: You be a-lying, John Perry. You always was a liar! I was saying what a liar you was only yesterday, to Mrs. Murrell I said it—"that John Perry be a liar," I said. Where did you murder him? Where's the body?

JOHN: We murdered en dead for his gold.

DICK: Shall us put leeches to en's head, Sir? He be mazed. It be the blood. Shall I go fetch Doctor?

PARSON: [*In a hard voice.*] Stay where you are, Richard Perry. Come here to the table—and you, Mrs. Perry. Will you lay your hands to this testament and swear you are innocent of this crime? This crime John accuses you of?

DICK: Sir, you don't surely—sir, you don't go for to believe him? Sir, you don't go for to believe him?

JOAN: My poor boy be crazed, sir. Make 'en set, sir. He don't know what he do say.

PARSON: I ask you to put your hands to this testament, and swear you are innocent of this crime. This crime John here accuses you of.

DICK: Sir, you ben't thinking—O! God, sir, you ben't thinking that?

JOAN: I do swear it, Sir. I swear it purely. Do 'ee let me bathe his head now, Sir. It be only a wammering-like.

JOHN: It ben't no wammering. It lie black on my breast.

PARSON: Come here to the table, Dick Perry. I want you to swear—Put your hand on this testament.

DICK: [*Aloud.*] What be I to say, sir?

JOHN: Say how we killed en, Dick. Say how we laid en dead.

DICK: I say you be a wicked liar, John, a liar afore God. I say as I be false accused, and as Mother is. And I say you be a wicked liar, John, or you be smit mad.

JOHN: You come to me last night, you did. And Mother come—"Let's kill en," you said—And you'd said it afore. "Let's kill en," you said—and Mother said it.

DICK: Parson, don't believe en! [*A pause.*]—God help my poor wife! [*He goes to testament.*]—I do swear as I be false accused. As I be innocent—And as Mother be.

MRS. H.: And I believe thee, Dick. Thy brother John be a liar: to Mrs. Murrell I said it. If he ben't swooning, now.

[DICK *puts his hand to his head, and sways a moment. He takes out a handkerchief, as he takes it out he drops some twine.*]

JOHN: [*Pouncing on the twine.*] Now what d'ye say, Dick Perry? 'Ee don't know this, do 'ee, now. What be this string, Dick? What be this, Mother?

DICK: It be my poor wife's hair net.

JOAN: Why, so it be. It be a hair net, to be sure.

PARSON: What do you know of this hair-string, John Perry? Do you know it?

JOHN: I know it, I do. And Mother know it, and Dick. To our cost we know it. It be the cord we murdered en with.

JOAN AND DICK: Oh, John Perry!

PARSON: Where was this? This that you say?

JOHN: Below Battle Ridge. At the foot o'hill it were. By the brook where they found ens collar.

JOAN: Us was never nigh the place.

DICK: John, have done with thy sport. Say you be fooling. Parson—Do 'ee think what 'ee be saying.

JOHN: I *do* think, I do. And *you* think. I confessed, I have. I made a clean breast—our sin be black—black it be—to kill poor Mr. Harrison.

PARSON: Be calm, Mrs. Harrison, hear all. [*He writes.*] Now tell us how you killed him. Listen Tom, you will have to give evidence at the trial.

DICK AND JOAN: Sir, don't you believe en. Sir, you ben't goin' to believe en. He be lying, sir. Mrs. Harrison knows he be lying. He be smit mad, sir.

PARSON: Keep silence, please. You will be heard in due course. Now, John.

JOHN: So brother Dick he says, "Let's kill en," "For ens gold," says Mother. Often they'd said it. So us goes out—

PARSON: What time was this?

JOHN: It were—it were twelve. So us goes out, and we see old Mr. Harrison coming, singing. In the moonlight we seed en, and Dick and Mother and I, we strangles un—with this cord. O, it were a black deed!

MRS. H.: [*Interrupting.*] John Perry, you be lying—where's the body? I don't believe as my poor man be dead. Nor I won't. Not till I touch his cold corpse—there now.

PARSON: Where is the body, John?

JOHN: Mother and Dick took ens body. They were hardened uns, they were. I were that shook by our black deed! O, a black deed it were. Where did 'ee put ens corpse, Mother? Hey, Dick?

DICK: [*To Parson.*] Sir, he be play-acting. You see he be play-acting.

JOAN: If my poor man were alive, us wouldn't be like this, us wouldn't. Do 'ee not damn thy soul black, John. Thou knows us be innocent.

JOHN: A proper hardened un, you was; and Dick was.

PARSON: Richard Perry, can you now, in the sight of God, put your hand on this testament, and swear yourself innocent, after what John here has said? Can you Mrs. Perry?

JOAN: I be a poor old widow woman, I be. I an't got no man, I an't, not since my poor man were took. Seventy year have I lived in Campden, and some time it have been hard, and some time it have been not so hard; and us have had our little home, us have, though us were poor. I have brought my sons up in the fear of the Lord. I wasn't never questioned like this afore. Us have borne a good name, us have, though us were poor. I be innocent, Sir. God forgive my poor lying boy.

JOHN: God forgive thee leading I to murder.

PARSON: Now, Richard Perry.

MRS. H.: Dick be fainting. [*To* PARSON.] It be a cruel shame, it be, sir, to vex us so. For shame, Sir.

DICK: I be innocent, I be. John knows I be innocent. My poor wife knows I be, and Mother knows. [*He touches book and sways.*]

PARSON: His nose is bleeding. It is the hand of God. God hath spoken, Tom.

TOM: Ess, sir.

PARSON: Call thy men.

[TOM *goes to door and whistles.*]

DICK: What be 'ee going to do, please, sir. Us have sworn.

[*Enter* MEN]

PARSON: Tom Constable, take John here, and Dick, and Mrs. Perry, to the lock-up.

DICK: Sir, do 'ee now!

TOM: Thee'd best come quiet, Dick. Us won't hurt 'ee.

DICK: But I be innocent. It be a lie. I ben't no murderer.

PARSON: You will be able to prove that at your trial. Remove them, Tom.

JOHN: Our blood be due for our black deed—Us shall all hang.

JOAN: Give me thy arm, Tom. I be a old woman. I ain't got no man, I an't. Book says us must be patient. [*She goes to* JOHN *and strokes his face.*] John, boy, thee be that like thy dad, John. Us must get Doctor to un, mustn't us, Dick? [*She makes her reverence to* PARSON.]

TOM: Come, mother, lean on my arm.

DICK: Bear on me, Mother. [*They support her to door.*]

JOAN: [*Turning at door.*] Mrs. Harrison, us be poor folk, false accused. Do 'ee get Doctor to look to my poor boy.

JOHN: Us shall be like Staffordshire—three hung in one knot.

PARSON: Do your office, Tom.

[*Exeunt* CONSTABLES, ETC.]

[*Manent* PARSON & MRS. HARRISON]

PARSON: Bear up, Mrs. Harrison. We are like old lanterns in the hall—we are dark—we are broken. And anon God takes us, and sets us on the walls of Heaven, amid unspeakable beauty, to light His Courts. Your husband—

MRS. H.: Mr. Parson, sir. You be a man of God, and you be a scholard. It don't beseem the likes of me to talk plain to the likes of you. You'd ought to go down on your knees and ask forgiveness. You be swift to shed innocent blood. *You* talk of lanterns, and such. Down on your knees, you ought to go. You've been and committed them Perrys on the word of a liar and a dog. My man ben't murdered—my man ben't murdered. That John Perry'd hang his mother for a sup of drink.

PARSON: Mrs. Harrison, John Perry would not accuse himself; you forget yourself.

MRS. H.: Forget myself, do I! In my own house—quotha! Ladida indeed—so I forget myself! You be a sneck up of a covetuous Levite, a creeping into widows' houses. That's what you be. Ladida indeed! But I ben't no widow. When my man comes home he shall reckon with thee, he shall. And the Perrys shall. They'll teach 'ee to shed innocent blood on the word of a dog and a liar. Marry, come up!

[*Exit* PARSON]

O, Willy Harrison, Willy Harrison! You and your beer will be my death.

CURTAIN

Scene III

[*A room in the lock-up at Broad Campden.* Mrs. Perry, Dick, John, *secured by wrists and ankles to chains. They are in different corners. A table in front.*]

Joan: Us be to die, Dick. Do 'ee bear up, lad. Thou knows, John, as us be innocent. And God he knows it. Us shall have mercy, Dick. Us shall walk the gold streets and that—forever, Amen.

Dick: It be easy for you to talk, Mother. I do think of my poor wife, I do, and of my poor babes. "There goes his wife," they'll say. That's what neighbours'll say. "Him as killed poor Mr. Harrison."

John: "As killed him for uns gold."

Dick: John, do 'ee now speak. Say as us be innocent. Don't 'ee see us hanged, boy. There be my poor wife, and my poor babes. Do 'ee speak, John, speak. Her'll be but a tramp, and my little Nan and all. Her were saying so pretty—And I shan't see un again. Lord, never again! And her'll want bread to eat, and go to bed crying. Do 'ee speak, John. For God's sake, John, say as us be innocent.

John: Us'll have ballads sung—and I shouldn't wonder. Us'll all be in a ballad. "The bloody Perrys, they was hanged—O, grief!" And there'll be drums, and the sun a-shining—on Broadway Hill and all. And there'll be neighbours. Sure to be. And us'll go in a cart, like high up folk. "There they go"; neighbours'll say, "as killed un for ens gold. They was always bad ones, them Perrys," they'll say.

Joan: John, thou be going afore thy Maker, thou be. Us be going to die to-day. It be a sad thing for a old woman to die with her sons—her two boys, as she's been that proud of. To be hanged up on a hill with neighbours calling her a old witch.

And then, there be Dick's little maids. O, John, do 'ee speak, lad! And us won't be put in churchyard. I shan't lie with my poor man, a dear! Whatever will I do, a dear! I shan't lie with my poor man!

JOHN: I ben't going to speak, I ben't. I said my say. To Judge I said it. Her were all in her red gownd. "Ah, you Perry," he said: "you be a notable rogue." Her had a sword afore her. Now us be going to be hanged. I wonder will us have ale give us. Old Cop of Aston, they give *him* ale.

[*Enter* TOM CONSTABLE]

TOM: Master Parson, sir.

JOAN: He ben't here—yet—Tom.

TOM: Can I do aught for 'ee, Mrs. Perry?

JOAN: Us be past it, Tom, I do thank 'ee. It be my boy, John, and my boy, Dick, as I be grieved for. And them little maids of Dick's. Us be false accused, us be, my poor mad boy knows. And God knows. And them little ones'll want bread when us be gone!

TOM: Mrs. Harrison have took Dick's little ones. God save 'ee, Mother. Us knows as you be innocent. And neighbours says it. God bless 'ee, Dick, if I don't see 'ee again.

DICK: God bless 'ee for thy kind words. 'Ee comfort poor Nan, Tom. Don't 'ee let folk say as her Daddy were hung. God comfort my poor Nan.

TOM: God bless 'ee, Dick, lad, and comfort 'ee. God forgive 'ee, John. Thy hands be red of blood, John; God forgive 'ee. [*To* PARSON, *entering*.] Saving your presence, sir.

PARSON: Go, Tom.

[*Exit* TOM]

JOAN: I be ready, sir. I be ready to go in the cart.

PARSON: Ah, Mrs. Perry! In a few moments you will be before God's Judgment Seat, a trembling bird on God's hand. How will you ask mercy of Him, when you have hardened your heart here on earth; denying the guilt for which you suffer!

JOAN: I ben't afeard to meet my God, sir. God have pity upon the poor and on the widows. I be innocent of blood, I be. I've been a great sinner, and I be punished for it. I set my boy John afore my boy Dick. Parson, I be dying. Will 'ee let I lie in Chrisom ground? Let I lie near my man, Parson, along of my poor husband?

[*Enter* TOM]

TOM: [*In a choking voice.*] It be the Sheriff, sir.

PARSON: Come, Mrs. Perry. You are about to walk in Paradise, among the holy ones. You are about to stand before God, in the glory unspeakable. Lean on me—lean on Tom here.

JOAN: John, won't 'ee say now as we be false accused? 'Ee won't see thy old mother hanged? Do 'ee speak. Say as you spoke lies, John. Thee knows 'ee did.

DICK: For God's sake, John.

JOHN: I confessed to Parson, and I confessed to Judge, I ben't bound to confess to you.

JOAN: God have mercy on us all then. May He have mercy on you, John—And on you, Dick—and on me, thy mother—and on all poor souls. May us meet glorified in God's golden courts, Amen.

PARSON: Amen. Come, Mrs. Perry.

JOAN: God be with 'ee, Dick. I've put 'ee to bed, Dick, a many times. But now I be going to bed afore you.

DICK: God be with 'ee, Mother. God comfort 'ee.

JOAN: God be with 'ee, too, John. For all your sins. [*She turns to go.*] 'Ee be that like thy poor feyther, John. I be going to God's holy house.

TOM: Lean on me, Mother. [*They go out at door—the drums beat up.*]

JOHN: O, us be going to have drums.

DICK Thou be a dog, John, thou be. O, John, say as us be innocent, say it out, now. It'll save Mother. It'll save my little Nan . . . Call, John; call! O John, thou be a dog!

JOHN: Call, Dick That be right. Call, Dick. Shout! Thy throat it won't call much longer.

DICK: Ah, God!

JOHN: O! It be "Ah, God" now, be it! It were "I be a proper godly one," it's not so long since. How about thy twelve shillin' a week, Dick? You that was to be that high in the world? Eh, Dick? Thy twelve shillin'? Lower than the dirt I've dragged 'ee. Like I said I'd do. Lower than the dirt, thou and thy twelve shillin'.

DICK: Then thee ben't mad. Thee've sworn our lives away!

JOHN: You be a clever one, you be!

[*Re enter* PARSON, *very white and sick, and* TOM]

DICK: Parson, John have confessed. He've confessed he have sworn false. O! Parson, do 'ee save Mother. He have confessed, sir.

JOHN: He be mazed, sir. Give un a cordial, Parson. He be clean mazed.

DICK: O, Sir, hear en. Do 'ee save Mother. Her said he'd done it a purpose to cross I. Do 'ee listen, sir.

PARSON: Come, Richard Perry. Compose yourself. We are

poor flames blowing in the wind, now one way, now another. In the peace of God's house our light will burn steadily. Come, Richard Perry.

[Tom *undoes chains*]

Dick: God help my poor wife. God help all dying men as folk won't listen to! I've lived honest, and I've worked honest, and this be the end.

Parson: It is but the beginning. There is no end to the glory and the peace of God.

Dick: [*To* John.] And no end to the fire for such as thee, John. May the red hot worms gnaw thy body, John. You dog, you dog!

Parson: Come, Dick. Help him, Tom.

Dick: O Parson, do 'ee make John speak. He have confessed, sir. O! Sir, he have confessed. Indeed, sir, he 've confessed. Make un speak, Parson. It'll save my Nan.

Parson: Come, Dick. It is but a step. Do not seek to stay longer in this wicked world.

Dick: But he've confessed, Parson. He've said as he were lying. O! sir, do 'ee.

John: Give un a cordial, Parson. He be fair mazed. Help en, Tom.

Tom: Come, be a man, Dick'

[*Exeunt—The drums again*]

John: There he do go, him and his twelve shillin'. Ah, you godly one! Ha, you godly one! They got you. Lower than the dirt, like as I said I'd do. Afore all Campden! You and your twelve shillin'! Make un a speech, Dick. Make thy speech and confession. O! if I might see thee. O! if only door were

open. Thee be looking pale, you and your twelve shillin'. You that thought to be high in the world. Aha! Aha!

[*A cry without and drums*]

There he do go! Aha! Aha!

[*A pause*]

[*Re-Enter* PARSON *and* TOM]

PARSON: O! the pity of it, the pity of it! O! Lord strengthen me.

JOHN: Mr. Parson, Sir, might I speak to 'ee, sir?

PARSON: In a minute. In a minute, John. O! Lord, have pity.

JOHN: I be a dying man, Parson. I got summat to say to 'ee.

[PARSON *stands*]

Parson, will 'ee give I comfort? I been a great sinner, I have. I been drunk, and I stole; and I been poaching, and I gone with women. And I kill poor Mr. Harrison. O! I been a black one, I have. Shall I have mercy, Parson? Be I doomed to the fire?

PARSON: There is joy, John, over one sinner that repenteth. God's mercy is infinite. Put your trust in Him, John.

JOHN: Ah, sir. I do feel it in my heart. It be a glow, like.

PARSON: Come, John Perry.

[TOM *undoes chains*]

There is yet one thing, John. Where is Mr. Harrison's body? You are about to die, John. Tell us this, that he may have Christian burial.

JOHN: It were Dick and Mother took his body, sir. I don't know where it be, I don't. But perhaps one day you'll find en. You'll be wiser on that day, Parson.

PARSON: You talk strangely, John.

JOHN: A dying man have a right to talk strange. I be ready, Sir. Will you say a prayer for me, Sir? "Our Father" or summat.

PARSON: Repeat it after me, John. Come.

[*Exeunt: Drums again*]

[*A pause, during which the drums beat. Then a march as the troops pass away.*]

[*Enter* MRS. HARRISON, *panting*]

MRS. H.: Are you there, Dick? Ah! Ah! If I'm not near my death. Are you there, Dick? Mrs. Perry!

[*Enter* PARSON. MRS. H. *fans herself.* PARSON *mops his brow.*]

PARSON: The wages of sin is death. [*He mops and sits down.*] The wages of sin is death. He talked strangely. And the old woman—Ah, God, her grey hairs—and then the frantic one, about his child. Ah, have pity, O Father! The wages of sin is death, death. It has been a terrible day. A terrible day.

MRS. H.: What's terrible? How has it been terrible? What ails you, man?

PARSON: [*Looking at her.*] O, Mrs. Harrison—

MRS. H.: Oh? Well, he's come home, like I said he would.

PARSON: Who?

MRS. H.: Who? Why, William Harrison, my husband.

PARSON: Come home?

MRS. H.: Yes, come home, like I said he would.

PARSON: Come home?

MRS. H.: If you don't vex a sinful woman's flesh! Yes, he has come home—boozing—That's where he's been.

[PARSON *covers his eyes and moans*]

[*Aloud*] Now, don't set there moaning—You've got to set them Perrys free.

[*She goes to him and shakes him*]

Go and find 'em, and set 'em free. Come, come, now, don't 'ee take it to heart. We all make mistakes. That John Perry, he might have had 'em all hanged.

PARSON: [*Weakly.*] They are—all hanged.

MRS. H.: What?

PARSON: Hanged. This morning.

MRS. H.: But it was to-morrow.

PARSON: No, to-day.

MRS. H.: But this be the sixteenth? This be Tuesday?

PARSON: No. [*A long pause.*]

MRS. H.: So that's why the town was empty. That's why the prison's got no—[*Fiercely.*] Be you telling the truth?

PARSON: O, don't, don't!

[*A pause*]

MRS. H.: May God be good to a sinful woman.

PARSON: Amen.

MRS. H.: They be happy to be out of such a world.

PARSON: "O, Father, Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?"

MRS. H.: Us be two poor souls, Parson.

[*Crying and laying her hand on his*]

CURTAIN

MRS. HARRISON

MRS. HARRISON

PERSONS

Will Harrison
Parson
Tom Constable
Mrs. Harrison

MRS. HARRISON

SCENE: *A Room in* MRS. HARRISON'S *House.*

MRS. H.: There's your cider. Take it; there's a toast in it. Take it. And now, you and I will have a reckoning.

WILL H.: Huh!

MRS. H.: [*Rapping table.*] You may groan and you may grunt, but you'll listen to me. And you'll answer me. You'll answer me, before you leave this room.

WILL H.: Gerr yer.

MRS. H.: I want to know about you, William Harrison. A nice husband you've been to me. And now I want to know about you, and you'll answer me. Where've you been all this long while? Where've you been, I say? What Dolly Draggle-tails have you been with?

WILL H.: Ah, put your head in a bag!

MRS. H.: Put my head in a bag! Put my head in a bag! You low dog, you. There's a way to talk to a woman. There's a way to talk to a wife. How dare you tell me put my head in a bag. How dare you, after what's past? How dare you? After leaving me alone this long while. Is this a world to leave a woman alone in? Is this a world to leave a nice, comely, decent, fine-grown woman alone in? Let alone your wife!

WILL H.: Huh! I run no risks leaving you.

MRS. H.: No. So you ran no risks, didn't you? There's some would have said different. There's some set a higher price on beauty than what you do. A comely woman's something to them, it is.

WILL H.: It is, is it? They're welcome!

Mrs. H.: When you've done with your insults, we'll talk. Where've you been all this long while?—You've been with your beer and your dollymops!—I'm sick to think I've kissed you.

Will H.: And I am.

Mrs. H.: Thank you. Thank you for nothing. And now I want an answer. When you've done with your sneers and your jeers I want an answer. D'ye know what you've done by going away? D'ye know what your beer and your trollopsing have been the cause of?

Will H.: I know what your naggin's 'll be the cause of. Here—[*he bangs mug*]—Cider.

Mrs. H.: You'll answer me first.

Will H.: Cider, I say.

Mrs. H.: You have been the cause of three folk being hanged; —John Perry, and Dick Perry and poor old Mrs. Perry;— Hanged. Hanged by the neck! That's a fine thing, isn't it, for beer and trulls to do? Where've you been, you tank, you dog, you low thing. Where've you been? What can you say for yourself?

Will H.: Gimme my cider. Gimme my cider when I tell you!

Mrs. H.: [*Snatching cider mug.*] Here! [*She smashes it on floor and stamps on fragments.*] There! That's all the cider you'll get. Now, answer.

Will H.: [*Getting up and snatching her wrists.*] Be that the game? Well, I'll answer. Sit down there. And you say another word, and you'll get a knock'll give you sense! I'll tell you where I've been; and keep it dark. You'd better. You speak a word of it, and you'll be missed. The first dark night as comes, you'll be missed.

Mrs. H.: That means you'll murder me.

WILL H.: Listen! I went away acos I was paid to go away. D'ye understand that? Paid.

MRS. H.: Who paid you?

WILL H.: Ah! Wouldn't you? And I was paid three hundred golden pound to go away. And my going away was worth that to the man as paid it.

MRS. H.: Where did 'ee go to?

WILL H.: I weren't never more'n twenty mile away.

MRS. H.: Then 'ee knew. 'Ee knew of what—'ee knew of the Perrys?

WILL H.: I knowed all about the Perrys.

MRS. H.: You knowed about the Perrys?

WILL H.: And glad to.

MRS. H.: You knowed they was to be hanged?

WILL H.: And glad to.

MRS. H.: And 'ee could have saved 'en.

WILL H.: I knowed one worth two of that. You listen to I and keep your mouth shut. John Perry knew where I were. And why I'd gone. Think I'd let 'en live when he were that crazy to go and get hanged? Think I'd stop 'en hanging when he knew my secret? Gerr yer; talk sense!

MRS. H.: Then you let them poor souls be hanged, knowing they was innocent.

WILL H.: Ah, talk sense.

MRS. H.: You set by and let them all be hanged?

WILL H.: Didn't I tell you I got three hundred pound? What's the Perrys to me? I know my duty, I hope. Hark you

to me, missus. It was my Lord give me that £300. It was to my Lord's advantage I should be away awhile. What's three Perrys, or six Perrys, or a churchful of Perrys to my Lord? Hark you to me! [*He gets up and goes to her.*] And you breathe so much as a shuddering, wee glimmer of a whisper,—you just raise your little dove-like voice—you just dare to! [*He snaps his fingers.*] And it'll be your last.

Mrs. H.: [*Slowly.*] And—I'm—to—live—with—a—murderer? I've had a murderer to bed with me, and held 'en in my arms! [*To* Will H.] And what tale will you tell the neighbours? What tale am I to tell the neighbours when they ask? Lord God! if it ben't pitiful!

Will H.: Damn the neighbours! Gimme my cider.

Mrs. H.: There's footsteps coming up the walk. It'll be parson. O God, Will, what be I to tell en?

[*A knock at the door*]

Will H.: Why, tell 'en—tell 'en—Tell 'en something; you'd better. Say I was kidnapped. And bear me out, now. Bear me out in that. I was kidnapped. [*Another knock.*] Set down there, [*she sits*] and now, remember. You say a word of the truth, [*he snaps his fingers*]—your neck'll go like that!—Come in! Who be there?

[*Enter* Tom Constable *and* Parson]

Why, if it bain't you, parson. Come in. Come in! Why now, if this ben't strange. What wonders I have to tell 'ee.

Parson: O Harrison. There have been wonders indeed. To think of you coming home safely, after all. Your wife is looking quite white, even now. I don't wonder.

Will H.: They do say, as joy kills quicker'n grief, parson.

Parson: You must look after Mrs. Harrison. It has been a terrible time for her.

TOM: Ah! it has.

WILL H.: [*Recognising* TOM.] Why, Tom. Tom Constable. And how be you, Tom? Why, what joy it be to meet all the old folk agen.

TOM: Thank 'ee, sir. I be doing kindly, sir.

PARSON: Yes, I brought Tom as a witness. I have to write to my Lord and tell him everything. Ah me, it is a terrible tale! And so you've come back?

WILL H.: They do say as seein' is believin'.

PARSON: Just to think, Mrs. Harrison. Ah, Mrs. Harrison! And so you've come back. O! if you had but come a day sooner. No, not a day; an hour; twenty minutes.

WILL H.: We be in God's hands, parson.

PARSON: It is the truth. And where've you been? Tell me now. Tell me everything. *Everything!*

WILL H.: Well, you'll think there's still miracles.

MRS. H.: He was kidnapped, parson; think of that, kidnapped.

WILL H.: By a man on horseback.

MRS. H.: By two men on horseback.

PARSON: Where was this? Was this where they found the collar?

MRS. H.: Yes, by Battle Ridge. They wore masks, and they seized him.

TOM: Why didn't 'ee welt their nags? I'd a welted en, afore they'd seized I.

MRS. H.: How could an old man fight agenst two?

PARSON: Yes,—and then?

WILL H.: Why then. . . . Why. . . . Let me see. Yes. So they said. . . . No a said nothing. . . . They up and . . . How were it now? [*Aside to* MRS. H.] Help me out or I'll hit 'ee one.

MRS. H.: They up and set you afore one of them. You told me just now.

WILL H.: Ah, they did. Afore one of them they set me.

MRS. H.: And he'd been eating onions, parson. Think of that. The one he set afore had been eating onions. Think of him noticing that. Think of a man noticing that.

PARSON: Go on, go on.

WILL H.: So they set me afore one of them. And he'd been eating onions. I could never abide the smell. No. I never could abide onions. Did you ever know me abide the smell of onions?

MRS. H.: No, you never did. You never could abide onions.

WILL H.: They do say as one man's meat be another's poison—

PARSON: So then?

WILL H.: Why, all in good time. . . . So then. . . . Where was I? So then. . . . You be in such a hurry. . . . Why. . . . So then. . . . I wish 'ee'd not interrupt.

MRS. H.: Here, William Harrison. If you aren't a trial and a torment. Do for goodness' sake let me tell the story!

TOM: Ah, do 'ee.

PARSON: Go on, Mrs. Harrison.

MRS. H.: So they rode him off, oh, for miles. And then they

came to a house, and they locked him in a room for all the next day. And at night they rode him off agen. And so on for a day or two. And then they came to a ship. And there he heard 'em selling his body for a slave. Selling his body for a slave—a slave to the Turk!

PARSON: How much did they give for you, William?

WILL H.: I heard one of them say thirty shillin'.

PARSON: But that couldn't have been for you. That'd never have paid taking you across England.

MRS. H.: It'd be more like thirty pound.

WILL H.: Well, it might a been pound. Thirty pound then.

MRS. H.: And then the ship was at sea, and at last they come to the Turks' country, where they sold him for a slave.

PARSON: To think of that now! A Campden man a slave to the Turk!

TOM: O Lord! thy wonders!

WILL H.: I was a slave to the Turk.

PARSON: What work did you do, William?

WILL H.: Why hard work. Hard work it was.

MRS. H.: He was a slave to a doctor, parson,—digging in the herb beds.

WILL H.: I dug 'em with a spade.

TOM: I'd a liked to a seen 'ee dig, master.

PARSON: And how did you get away, William?

WILL H.: Well, I got away, didn't I,—though I be old.

TOM: Old and bold as the saying is.

PARSON: Ah, but how?

MRS. H.: His master sent him to an English merchant with a bottle of elixir. The merchant was sick. And William said he was an Englishman as had been stole away. And the merchant put 'en in a ship. And so he came home.

PARSON: What port did you land at?

WILL H.: [*Puzzled.*] It was Norfolk, I do think.

MRS. H.: Norfolk my grandmother! *Portsmouth* don't I keep telling you. [*To* PARSON.] I think my man would make a saint cross. *Portsmouth*, Will. Norfolk's in France.

WILL H.: Ah, *Portsmouth*. I ben't no learned astronomer. One place be like another to me. I don't hold with these new fangled towns. I been a slave to the Turk. Give I Campden.

TOM: O, the wonders of the Lord!

PARSON: Well, Will; you ought to write a book.

WILL H.: I don't know about any book. The Christian religion's book enough. There's a book. All else is sin, books is.

TOM: Ah!

PARSON: Now, Will. I want you to come up to the church with me to return thanks for your restoration, and ask His mercy for our sins, and for the deaths of His innocents, the Perrys.

WILL H.: Ah, that I will, Parson. [*They turn to go.*]

PARSON: Come, Mrs. Harrison.

MRS. H.: I be feeling overcome, Parson, I'll stay here and read the Bible, while you prays.

PARSON: You must take care of yourself, Mrs. Harrison.

You must look after your wife, William. She has had a grievous trial.

WILL H.: She'll pull round, you'll find. Joy cometh in the morning.

MRS. H.: Have I been a good wife to you, Will?

PARSON: She's been overwrought, William.

MRS. H.: Have I been a good wife to you, Will?

WILL H.: Now don't 'ee fuss. Set quiet. She'll be all right; she just needs letting alone a while. Come, Parson, us'll just step to church. [*Exit* PARSON *and* WILL H. TOM *holds door for them.*]

MRS. H.: [*As* TOM *goes.*] Tom!

TOM: Yes, Mrs. Harrison?

MRS. H.: Come here, Tom. [TOM *goes to table.*]

MRS. H.: Reach me the Bible.

TOM: Here it be, miss.

MRS. H.: Now, Tom.

TOM: Yes, Mrs. Harrison.

MRS. H.: You know them little girls of Dick Perry's?

TOM: Ay!

MRS. H.: You'll look after them little girls, Tom?

TOM: I said I'd do. And I will do.

MRS. H.: You'll not let folk say as their daddy were hung?

TOM: I'll break their heads as says it. They'll not say it twice, if they says it once.

MRS. H.: You'll swear that, Tom, swear it on the Bible.

TOM: There be'n't no call to swear, mum. You knows me, I hope.

MRS. H.: Swear it. Swear you'll look after 'em. Whatever happens. . . .

TOM: What I can do I'll do.

MRS. H.: [*Going to a drawer.*] This be for you, Tom, to spend for them little girls. It be what I got by my hens. It be near five pound in silver.

TOM: I don't ask no money, I be glad to do a kindness. I don't ask no money.

MRS. H.: Take it. Take it, I say! And may the Lord prosper you for all you do for them poor little maids. Look after 'em, Tom.

TOM: I'll look after 'em, mum.

MRS. H.: Now go, Tom. I be all-to frushed and of a frammock.

TOM: Can I get 'ee anything?

MRS. H.: No, Tom. Now 'ee go.

TOM: Good day to 'ee, mum.

MRS. H.: God save 'ee, Tom.

[*Exit* TOM]

MRS. H.: I been wife to a murderer. . . . I been wife to a murderer. . . . I've been to bed with a man as done murder; and I've helped un clear after. . . . [*She rocks in her chair; then gets up and goes to cupboard.*] But never no more, William Harrison, you've had your last of me. . . . [*She opens cupboard.*] I be the lowest of the low. O Lord, I be the lowest of

the low. . . . I feel as I'd been spat on. [*She rummages among bottles.*] But never no more, William Harrison. . . . God have mercy on a sinful woman. . . . You've had your last of me, William Harrison. You can go to your Jennies, you can. . . . [*She takes out a paper.*] This is it. This is it,—is the cure. I bought it for the rattens as ate my chicks. What'll kill rattens'll kill folk. Where be my thimble? [*She pours powder into thimble and drinks.*] Ugh! it be bitter! [*She pours again and drinks.*] Ugh! [*She puts thimble and paper into fire. The fire spurts up.*] Ah, pretty it be! [*She goes to table and begins to read the Bible: she spells it out slowly.*]

"But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them: Suffer the little children to come unto me. Suffer the little children to come unto me." Us be little children—"And forbid them not." . . . It be a long road for poor folk. . . . It be a cold road for us, poor children. . . . [*dies*].

THE END

THE SWEEPS OF NINETY-EIGHT

THE SWEEPS OF NINETY-EIGHT

SCENE: *An inn at Dunleary. A parlour.* TIGER ROCHE, *an old, well-preserved man, with his left arm in a sling.*

ROCHE: I have been in seven lost causes. This is the seventh; and it comes to an end like the others. There were good fellows with me. They poured out their lives like water. Good fellows they were. They are all gone now. Shears, and all of them. My God! but they were brave. And to think of those swine at the Castle ruling men like they were! [*He rings the bell.*]

[*Enter* HOSTESS]

Well, what did the ship-captain say?

HOSTESS: There'll be a boat below the door here in half an hour from now.

ROCHE: And he'll engage to land me in France?

HOSTESS: In France itself.

ROCHE: You said half an hour?

HOSTESS: Yes, sir.

ROCHE: So I've half an hour more in Ireland. Half an hour more in Ireland, and then—

Adieu for ever more,
My love,
Adieu for ever more.

Well, there's no sense in sorrow; I may as well have some wine.

HOSTESS: What wine would you like, sir? Claret? Burgundy?

ROCHE: Have you any Miss Taylor?

HOSTESS: Why, sir, that's a common drink. Only sailors drink Miss Taylor.

ROCHE: I drank a cup of Miss Taylor the day I landed at Killala. I would drink it again to the memory of the friends who pledged me in it. [*Soliloquising.*] It ought not to have failed. But the honest purpose does fail, for it is fighting the knavery of the world. It's a harsh alternative, to fail or be British. Fail, aye, and I'm proud to fail.

Better be trampled out by asses' hooves
Than be the thing the asses' mind approves.

[HOSTESS *goes out and returns with bottle and glass*]

HOSTESS: Here it is, sir.

ROCHE: I thank you.

[HOSTESS *goes out*]

[*Pouring out a glass of wine and holding it up.*] I drink to you, my comrades. You fought a good fight, my comrades. You were spent like water. Your names shall be written in fire.

[*Re-enter* HOSTESS]

HOSTESS: There's some gentlemen coming, sir. Perhaps you'd like to step aside, sir. The cellar's dark, and there's a good place in the henhouse.

ROCHE: I'll stay where I am, thank you.

HOSTESS: It may be dangerous for you to stay, sir. One of them's that Major Sirr.

ROCHE: I shall be glad to meet him.

HOSTESS: [*Looking out.*] It may be very dangerous, sir. One of them's that Major Sandys.

ROCHE: O! Who's the third?

HOSTESS: Sir, would you not be advised, since it might be your death? He's the drunken fat man who flogged poor Mr. Wright. I must go out, sir.

[*Exit*]

ROCHE: Old Fitzpatrick! I shall have pleasant company for my last half-hour in Ireland. [*He sits down.*]

[*Enter* MAJOR SIRR, MAJOR SANDYS, *and* THOMAS JUDKIN FITZPATRICK, J. P.]

FITZ.: And so, sir, when he said that, sir, there was no use bothering a jury.

SIRR: Aha. Very good, very good You are a wag, sir.

FITZ.: Yes, sir, the rebellious dog.

SAND.: All the same, the rebellion's not stamped out. I shall be glad when that new regiment comes in.

SIRR: What new regiment?

SAND.: O, a Kentish regiment. Fencibles and that. They'll be marching through here, by the way. Before we go, I expect.

SIRR: Well, the more the merrier. But all the same, I think we've scotched the rebellion. Let's sit down and be merry.

SAND.: All the same, I'm glad the new regiment's coming. And I'm glad it'll pass this tavern. We are in the enemy's country, so far from Dublin.

SIRR: Come, let's be merry. Mr. Fitzpatrick, I hear you hanged the last of these rebels yesterday morning.

FITZ.: Yes, sir; the rebellious dog. Under God's providence I hanged that rebel, sir. The rebellious dog, sir, he was little better than a common atheist. If we could catch that arch-traitor, Tiger Roche, sir; why, honest men, sir, could sleep in peace again.

SAND.: Why, I thought Tiger Roche had died twenty years ago.

FITZ.: That's an instance, sir, of the lengths these rebels go to. It's their subtlety, sir; their canting, lying, hypocritical subtlety. He pretended he was dead, sir. He gave out a report that he was dead, sir. And then, sir, if you please, he lands at Killala with a troop of pike-men. Dead? A crocodile's tears, sir. Twenty years of scheming and plotting; and pretending all the time he was in his grave. [*Staring hard at* ROCHE.] Who's the old put with his arm in a bag?

SIRR: O, some old put or other. Let's be merry. [*He rings the bell.*]

[*Enter* HOSTESS]

SIRR: Mine's brandy. What's yours? What's yours, Sandys?

FITZ.: A bottle of brandy, woman. Bring a bottle of brandy.

[HOSTESS *brings bottle and glasses. Then lingers.*] Well, ma'am. And why don't you go, ma'am?

HOSTESS: The brandy is half a guinea, sir.

FITZ.: You saucy jade. Hark ye, mistress. I'd have you know, ma'am, that I'm a justice of the peace, ma'am. I shouldn't wonder if you're another of these pernicious atheistical Friends of Ireland, as they call them. Pernicious, lying, murderous dogs.—Well! What are you waiting for?

HOSTESS: I'm waiting for my money, sir. I don't like to be put upon.

FITZ.: What? Rebel, would you, against the King's Peace? I am the King's Peace, madam. Not another word, or I'll commit you.

[*Exit* HOSTESS]

SIRR: You are a wag, sir. You are merry.

SAND.: Excellent. Excellent.

[*They draw to the table, unbuckle their belts, put down their swords and papers, and prepare to enjoy themselves.*]

[*To* FITZ.] They say you made a great haul of rebels in Tipperary, about six weeks back.

FITZ.: Under God's providence, I did, sir. I caught seven, sir. I had them all flogged, sir, and then hanged the eldest. Strong measures, sir; but without strong measures we shouldn't sleep in peace, sir. No, sir. If we didn't exert the strong arm, sir—and you will agree with me that might is right—there'd be a subversion of all Liberty. But I thank God, sir, that we have a Constitution. Let me hear no cant about Equality and Liberty, and the Rights of Man, sir. Show me a man who talks of Truth, and I will show you a rebel.

SIRR: Hear, hear.

SAND.: Well, about the rebels. How did you catch them?

FITZ.: Catch them? I saw them in the streets, sir. The effrontery of these rebels knows no bounds, sir.

SAND.: What, with arms in their hands?

FITZ.: Arms in their hands? No, sir. In Tipperary, sir—under God's providence—they know better.

SAND.: Well—but how did you know them?

FITZ.: Know them, sir? I knew them by their waistcoats, their canting, atheistical, seditious red French waistcoats. There was "Down with Church and State" in every button. Sir, the evidence was plain, sir. Those waistcoats would have condemned a Christian martyr, sir.

ROCHE: [*Aside.*] It seems they did.

FITZ.: What's the old put there muttering?

SAND.: Ah, don't pay any heed to him. Tell us of the man who didn't take off his hat to you.

SIRR: Yes, tell us of that. You are a wag, Mr. Fitzpatrick. I'm afraid you're a merry wag, sir.

FITZ.: Sir, your very good health.

SIRR: O, sir, your servant, I'm sure.

[*They drink*]

SAND.: Well, about the man——

FITZ.: O, yes. The rebellious hound. He didn't take off his hat to me, sir. Well, sir. He that affronts me, sir, affronts King George, sir. For I, sir, under God's providence, am King George's Justice of the Peace, sir; so, sir, when a man does not salute me, he does not salute King George, sir. He is a rebel, sir. A *sans-culotte*, sir. A murdering pike in the hand of a *sans-culotte*, sir. He is a rebel on the face of it. And so, sir, to make a short tale, I gave him fifty lashes. And d'ye know, sir, he had the brazen-faced effrontery to contradict me when I called him a rebel to his teeth. Beat that if you can, sir. What d'ye think of that, sir? Beat it if you can for cold-blooded, brazen-faced, rebellious audacity. These people are possessed of the devil, sir.

SAND.: Look at my case. Only last week. I had a traitor. He was taken in the fact, as it were. That man Hevey. Why, he was a known traitor. There was no need to try him. The thing was evident. I condemned him to be hanged. Well, he had a mare, a grey mare, a famous creature. I told him to send her round to me. I told him straight out that a mare like her should never again load her loyal loins with the vile burden of a convicted traitor. And he'd the heaven-sent impudence to complain to General Craig.

FITZ.: These people are possessed of the devil, sir. But come, a bumper. A bumper.

SIRR: [*Aside.*] I think that old put's a rebel. He blushed like fire, Major, when you told your story.

[*They look at* ROCHE, *who is reading a little book*]

FITZ.: What's he reading? These reading people, they're generally deep ones.

SIRR: [*Peeping.*] It seems to be poetry.

FITZ.: [*Aside.*] Poetry? He is a rebel without doubt. [*Aloud.*] I would make it a capital offence to read poetry. Yes, sir. When a man deliberately starts to poison his mind with incendiary cant about Truth and Beauty, he is as good as damned, sir. I would hang any man who read poetry. A man who has a book of poems in one hand has always a rebel's pike in the other. You mark my words, sir. Ahem! You, sir! You with your arm in the sling.

ROCHE: You were pleased to speak to me?

FITZ.: Yes, sir, I was pleased, as you call it, to speak to you. Don't trifle with me, sir. For I am, under God's providence, a Justice of the King's Peace, King George's deputy, under God's providence, if you know what that means.

ROCHE: Sir, I know what that means. Yes, sir, I know what that means. Its meaning is written red across this island.

FITZ.: So, sir. I am glad to find you so well affected. Are you an honest man, sir?

ROCHE: Come, Mr. Fitzpatrick. A man is known by the company he keeps.

SIRR: You are a wag, sir.

FITZ.: So, sir, I see you know me?

ROCHE: Not know Mr. Fitzpatrick!

FITZ.: Why then, sir, you will let me see what book you are reading.

ROCHE: With pleasure, sir. The Odes of Horace.

SAND.: I know that Odes O'Horace to be a pamphleteering rebel. Mr. Fitzpatrick, we must secure this man.

SIRR: [*Looking at book.*] There's mighty few rebels understands Hebrew, let me tell you that, Sandys.

ROCHE: [*To* SIRR.] I thought I couldn't be mistaken. Can it be—tell me—Am I not in the presence of Major Sirr, the saviour of this benighted country, the apprehender of that arch-offender, that rebel chief, Sir Peter Keogh? O happy day! A glorious privilege!

FITZ.: Yes, sir, that is Major Sirr, sir. Our Saviour under God's providence, Major Sirr, sir. Come, sit down and be merry, Mr.—Mr.—what's your name?

SAND.: All very well, Fitzpatrick. But you and I are of the Commission. Hark! There's the fifes. The regiment's coming. We'd better send him in with the regiment and have him properly examined.

SIRR: Don't be an ass, Sandys.

FITZ.: Major Sandys, sir. When you are drunk, sir, you are a credit to your King and your religion, sir. But Major Sandys, sir, when you are sober sir, you are a dry toast, sir. You stick in an honest man's throat, sir. Damme, sir, sit down and drink like a Christian.

SAND.: Well. The regiment's coming. The band are out of tune. These militia are the deuce. Well, Mr. Rebel, or Mr. Honest Man, whoever you are, the bottle lies with you.

FITZ.: Give us a toast, Mr. Honest Man.

ROCHE: Gentlemen, pass up your glasses. I will give you a toast. Hand up your glasses. I will give you a toast.

SIRR: What is it you're drinking?

ROCHE: Tokay, Major, a kind of Imperial Tokay.

FITZ.: A man who drinks Tokay, sir, is a man of principle. Did the rebels drink Tokay? No, sir, they drank vile atheistical whisky.

ROCHE: Come, don't abuse whisky. I've known whisky get a grocer knighted.

FITZ.: Sir, a King, sir, is above the law, sir. Come, give us your toast.

SAND.: Yes, give us your toast.

SIRR: Fill fair, now, honest man.

[ROCHE *lines up the three glasses and fills them full*]

FITZ.: Your toast, now.

ROCHE: Gentlemen, I give you a toast—"The Trinity of Judas."—There, sir, is yours; there's yours, Major Sandys; there's yours, Major Sirr.

[*He flings the glasses one by one into the faces of the trio*]

Gentlemen, I am Tiger Roche. I hope you like your wine.

SIRR: Traitor! Help me, you two. There is a thousand pounds reward.

FITZ.: My religion forbids re—retaliation.

SAND.: [*To* ROCHE.] Well, you bully. The regiment's coming. Then we'll see about Mr. Tiger Roche, with his toasts and his Hebrew.

[SIRR *tries to reach his sword*]

ROCHE: [*To* SIRR.] I should be sorry to have your blood upon my sword, Major Sirr.

[SIRR *relapses*]

[*To* SANDYS.] Now, Mr. Sandys, about your regiment. That is not your regiment. Your regiment is a red ruin at Rathnew. Those fifes are the fifes of the Friends of Ireland. In five minutes' time I hope to be leading them to Dublin.

ALL: What! O God, we are lost!

ROCHE: Sit down, you carrion.

SIRR: And I've a wife and two sons.

ROCHE: What! Human feeling in a Sirr!

FITZ.: O Mr. Roche, sir; Captain Roche, sir. Have pity; I am not fit to die.

ROCHE: Truth from a Fitzpatrick!

SAND.: O Captain Roche. You shall have the grey mare. Hevey's famous mare, that won the trotting match.

ROCHE: Generosity in a Mr. Major Sandys.

ALL: O Mr. Roche, we'll reform. O, hide us, Mr. Roche. Not the mob, Mr. Roche. We shall be torn limb from limb.

ROCHE: Well, you'd better get up that chimney.

FITZ.: My belly'll never go up there.

ROCHE: Well, it had better go there.

SAND.: It won't hold us all. You must stand out, Fitzpatrick. Stand by, Sirr. I go first. [*He gets up the chimney.*]

SIRR: O God, will I be in time? [*He gets up the chimney.*]

[*The fifes sound clearly*]

FITZ.: My belly will bring my grey hairs in sorrow to the

grave. O you inhuman Sandys. Help me up. O, help me up. I'll squeeze in somehow. O Mr. Roche, help me up. Do now, kind Mr. Roche. O, I shall choke. [*He gets up the chimney.*] [*An agonised voice from the chimney:*] Do our legs show?

[*The band sounds without.* ROCHE *gathers up their papers in a pile. Then goes to the window.*]

ROCHE: Ho, there. Captain!

VOICE WITHOUT: What d'ye want?

ROCHE: Bring in a file of men. There are some rebels secreted here.

[*The troops ground arms and halt. Enter* CAPTAIN *and file*]

CAPTAIN: Well, sir, where are the rebels?

ROCHE: Sir, I hold the King's Commission. I have traced these rebels here. Five minutes since we were drinking at this table. They are up that chimney. Do your duty.

SOLDIERS: [*Running to chimney.*] Here's a leg. Here they are all right. Yank them down, sons. We'll give you Killala Bay. We'll give you Erin-go-bragh. In the neck we'll give it to you. [*They pull down three filthy, blinking scarecrows.*]

[*As they wipe the soot from their eyes* ROCHE *indicates them*]

ROCHE: This [*pointing to* SANDYS] is Mr. Napper Tandy. This [*pointing to* SIRR] is Captain Tiger Roche. He looks a tiger, I must say. This [*pointing to* FITZPATRICK] is that archfelon, Mr. Wolfe Tone. Guard them carefully, Captain. They are worth some seven thousand pounds.

ALL THREE: [*Recognising the King's uniform through the soot.*] Unhand us, Captain. We are the King's Justices. That man there is the rebel. That is Tiger Roche, Captain. We are the King's Justices.

A SOLDIER: Bleeding fine Justices the King's got, then.

A Soldier: You and your Justices. We'll give you all the justice you need. An ounce of lead is the justice you'll get.

All Three: Unhand us, will you! Captain! What are you doing? That is the rebel. That is Tiger Roche. Take off your men. We are the King's Justices.

Captain: I've heard that song before. Shut your damned seditious heads or I'll make you chew a trooper's cook.

Roche: [*Smiling.*] What in the world's a trooper's cook? Captain.

Captain: It's a piece of wood, sir. It's all the cook a trooper has. Between the teeth, it is an effective gag.

All Three: But hear us, Captain.

A Soldier: Blimy! Shut your heads. Don't you hear what the Captain tells you?

Sand.: Damn it, Captain. You shall suffer——

Fitz.: If there's justice in Ireland.

A Soldier: There's no justice in Ireland.

Sirr: But there's law, sir. And you shall have it.

Captain: Yes, there's law, and you shall have it. There's man-o'-war law—"over the face and eyes."

Sergeant: Like the cat give the monkey.

Roche: You've secured their hands, sir. They are three desperate felons.

Sergeant: Their hands won't give no trouble.

Captain: [*To* Roche.] Well, sir. What next?

Roche: [*Writing at table.*] O, march them into Dublin—

this note will explain—and give them in charge to General Craig.

CAPTAIN: I presume you will come, too, sir.

ROCHE: I will follow in a moment. I must place a seal on these papers I have found here.

THE THREE JUSTICES: That proves it, Captain. He's the rebel. He's Tiger Roche. Don't let him stay behind, Captain.

ROCHE: Captain, remove those babblers. Silence, you felons. Give them the trooper's cook. Stay a moment. Leave a file of men. They can bear witness to my sealing the papers.

CAPTAIN: I've a reputation to keep up. What! Leave my men in a tavern? No, sir, and I'm obliged to you. The hostess will be witness enough. Forward, my croppy boys. Quick march.

ROCHE: But you'll have a drink before you go, Captain?

CAPTAIN: Not in working hours, thank ye. Now, my croppy boys.

THE THREE: You shall hang for this, Captain.

CAPTAIN: There's some I know will hang too. Quick march, I say. [*He nods to* ROCHE.] I'll see you later, at the General's.

ROCHE: At General Craig's. But I shall probably overtake you on the road.

CAPTAIN: "We will meet at that beautiful shore." Quick march, my sons.

[*Exeunt. The troops pass on*]

[*A pause, during which* ROCHE *watches them from the window*]

ROCHE: Well, the fire's out and the guests are gone. There's only the bill to pay. [*He empties a purse on the table.*]

[*Enter* HOSTESS]

HOSTESS: The boat is waiting below, sir.

ROCHE: It is good-bye, then.

HOSTESS: You'll be coming again, sir. There'll be other friends going the same road.

ROCHE: I shall be too old when they try again. Good-bye.

Now with his useless steel the beaten rebel goes
To that proud misery's peace no victor ever knows.

Written in 1905.

THE LOCKED CHEST

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

(From a Tale in the Laxdaelasaga)

THE LOCKED CHEST

PERSONS

THORD GODDI	*A Farmer*
VIGDIS GODDI	*Wife of Thord*
THOROLF	
INGIALD	*A Lord*
SOLDIERS	*Adherents of Ingiald*

SCENE

Iceland

THE LOCKED CHEST

SCENE: *A room. A chest used as a bench. A table, etc.* VIGDIS *embroidering a cloth.*

VIGDIS: [*Singing.*]

My love is drowned in the Lowlands,
Away. Heigho.
My love is drowned in the Lowlands,
Lowlands no more.

[*Enter* THORD GODDI]

Well, Thord. I hope you had a good market.
[*Sings.*]

His hair is cold with the seaweed,
Away. Heigho.
His hair is cold with the seaweed,
Lowlands no more.

Come and sit down by the fire, won't you?
[*Sings.*]

O my love is drowned in the Lowlands,
Away—

THORD: For heaven's sake, stop it.

VIGDIS: Stop what?

THORD: That caterwauling.

VIGDIS: Caterwauling?

THORD: I'm not going to have that howling when I've got a headache—

VIGDIS: I'm sorry I sang when you had a headache. I didn't know.

THORD: I've always got a headache.

VIGDIS: I'm sorry, Thord.

THORD: O, don't "sorry" me. If you're so sorry as all that there'd have been a nice supper ready. But there. It's always the way.

VIGDIS: Let me get you your supper.

THORD: O, I don't want it now, thanks. I couldn't eat it. Why wasn't it ready for me, the moment I came in?

VIGDIS: But, Thord. My dear man.

THORD: How many more times am I to tell you I won't be "my deared" when I've a headache?

VIGDIS: I'm sorry, Thord.

THORD: If you knew how much it aggravated. But there. You only do it to drive me mad.

VIGDIS: I don't, Thord.

THORD: Contradict me. Do. That's right. Contradict me. I suppose you'll say next— But there, it's always the way.

VIGDIS: Thord!

THORD: Now, why wasn't supper ready the moment I came in?

VIGDIS: You said you'd be home late, Thord, and that supper wasn't to be till half-past seven.

THORD: You might have known the fair would be a bad one.

VIGDIS: Was the fair a bad one?

THORD: O, use your sense. Use your sense, woman.

VIDGIS: But I do, Thord.

THORD: Would I be here at this time if the fair had been a good one? You know perfectly well I shouldn't.

VIGDIS: I'm so sorry, Thord.

THORD: [*Growling.*] Yes, so that you might have more money to spend on jewellery. [*He sits down.*] I'm tired.

VIGDIS: Let me help you pull your boots off. [*She pulls a boot and drops it.*]

THORD: O, for Heaven's sake.
Didn't I tell you I'd got a headache? But there. No, I'll take off the other myself. I'm tired to death.

VIGDIS: Let me give you a nip of brandy.

THORD: Brandy? With a headache? You know brandy nearly kills me. Now do for Heaven's sake leave me alone.

VIGDIS: You're tired, Thord. You're tired. Lie down on the chest, and rest till supper. You're tired to death.

THORD: I wouldn't be tired if I wasn't driven half mad by your tongue. A plague take all wives and all fairs.

VIGDIS: Tell me about the fair, Thord, if you're not too tired.

THORD: I've already told you about the fair.

VIGDIS: Were there many people?

THORD: Enough to fill a graveyard. I'd be glad to have the burying of some of them.

VIGDIS: What's the news?

THORD: News? What d'ye want with news?

VIGDIS: But I like to hear what's going on. What were they talking of?

THORD: What were who talking of?

VIGDIS: The people at the fair.

THORD: None of their business. That's what they were talking of. They were talking of a murder.

VIGDIS: A murder!

THORD: [*Shouting.*] A murder. Can't you pay attention when I'm talking to you? I said a murder. Why don't you listen?

VIGDIS: Who has been murdered?

THORD: I didn't say anyone had been murdered.

VIGDIS: But you said—

THORD: But I said nothing of the sort. There was a fight down on the beach and a man was killed.

VIGDIS: What man?

THORD: That big swaggering fellow Hall.

VIGDIS: Hall? Brother of Ingiald?

THORD: Yes. Brother of Ingiald. A lout he was, too.

VIGDIS: Who killed him?

THORD: Does it matter to you who killed him?

VIGDIS: No. Only I would like to know.

THORD: You're always wanting to know. You want to know too much. What was Hall to you?

VIGDIS: Nothing. My cousin was his partner. That's all I know about him. And they used to quarrel all day, as though they were man and wife.

THORD: I suppose that's meant for me. Well, I don't know who killed him. But I know this.

VIGDIS: What?

THORD: I pity the man who did it.

VIGDIS: Why?

THORD: Have you any sense at all, woman?

VIGDIS: I don't see why he should be pitied.

THORD: Well, I do. D'you suppose a great man like Ingiald will let his brother's murderer escape?

VIGDIS: But you said it was a fight on the beach.

THORD: I said. I said. I said. Nag. Nag. Nag. Even if it were, d'you suppose a man like Ingiald would let the man escape? Ingiald'll hunt him down. That murderer's a doomed man.

VIGDIS: Poor fellow, I say.

THORD: Serve him right, I say. Serve him right.

VIGDIS: I wonder who it was.

THORD: It isn't known who it was. Two or three are suspected.

VIGDIS: I hope it wasn't cousin Thorolf.

THORD: Well, if it was he must take the consequences.

VIGDIS: That man Hall was a sad man to work with. I hate to speak ill of a dead man; but he had a bad name.

THORD: He was a drunken boor.

VIGDIS: He went for Thorolf with an axe once.

THORD: Well, I pity the man who went for *him* with an axe. Is supper ever going to come at all? Or am I to stay talking here all night?

VIGDIS: Won't you go in and lie down, Thord? Supper will be ready in a moment.

THORD: How can I go in and lie down? You know perfectly well I've got to see to the chores. I can't trust the hired men.

VIGDIS: I'll run out and see to the chores, Thord.

THORD: You? I can't trust you to get supper, let alone do the chores. No. I must sacrifice myself. I've got a headache and I'm half dead. But there, it's always the way. I must do a thing myself if I want it done. Give me my boots.

VIGDIS: Let me go, Thord. I'll see the cows driven in and milked.

THORD: Give—me—my—boots. Don't I tell you? Don't tell me what you'll do and what you'll not do. There [*puts on boots*], I thought when I came in I'd have time to rest myself. But there. It's always the way. [*Turns to go out.*] What are you glowering there for? Go—and—get—the supper ready. When you've worn me to my grave I suppose you'll be glad. You do make me so mad.

VIGDIS: I'll have supper directly, Thord.

THORD: You do make me so mad. But there. It's always the way. [*He goes out.*]

VIGDIS: It's a pity we've no child, Thord and I. They say a child is a great sweetener in a house. If we'd a child, perhaps he wouldn't take on so. Ah well. It wasn't like this when we were courting. I must get this table clear. If I'd had a child now, he'd have been different. That's what a wife must expect. Nothing but "O my headache," and "O if I'm not tired." I only wanted to hear about the murder. It's not so often we get a murder to talk about. The way he talks you'd think we had one every day. So Hall is murdered. I never liked that man. I wonder who killed him. Well. There's one comfort. My cousin Thorolf wouldn't go for to kill a man. Not even Hall, he wouldn't. He wouldn't kill a fly, my cousin Thorolf wouldn't.

He's like a blessed babe. [*The door at the back is knocked violently.*] Bless us and save us.

VOICE: Let me in. Let me in. Vigdis. Thord.

VIGDIS: Who's there?

VOICE: Open. Open. For God's sake let me in.

VIGDIS: Enter. If you be of God.

VOICE: Open.

VIGDIS: [*Running to door.*] Come in. Who's there?

[*Enter* THOROLF]

Thorolf. Cousin Thorolf. How are you?

THOROLF: Stand back. Don't kiss me.

VIGDIS: What's the matter, Thorolf?

THOROLF: Stand back. You keep your hands off.

VIGDIS: But I'm your cousin, Thorolf.

THOROLF: Yes. But perhaps you won't be quite so glad to be my cousin when you hear the news.

VIGDIS: What news, Thorolf?

THOROLF: About Hall.

VIGDIS: He's dead. What d'ye mean, Thorolf?

THOROLF: I killed him, Vigdis.

VIGDIS: You, Thorolf?

THOROLF: He cheated me. O, but I can't go into that. So we fought, and I killed him. It was a fair fight. I didn't want to kill him, God knows.

VIGDIS: Men have no sense when they have swords in their hands.

THOROLF: It was a fair fight.

VIGDIS: I'm not blaming you, Thorolf. It seems men must kill each other from time to time. But what are you going to do now?

THOROLF: What indeed?

VIGDIS: You know what it means. You must know what it means. Do they know you did it?

THOROLF: Ingiald will know by this.

VIGDIS: But you know what Ingiald is. He'll be after you to-night, now. Now. What will you do? What will you do, Thorolf?

THOROLF: You're my cousin, Vigdis?

VIGDIS: Of course I'm your cousin.

THOROLF: You wouldn't cast me off. You don't think worse of me. I mean, it was a fair fight. It was fair and square.

VIGDIS: Of course I won't cast you off. You're my cousin. Men have no sense at any time. But when they have swords in their hands—it might happen to anyone.

THOROLF: Vigdis. Will you stand by me?

VIGDIS: You're my cousin, Thorolf. There's my hand. But don't waste time like this. Where will you hide? Who can shelter you against Ingiald? The King himself could hardly do it. It's death to shelter you. Where will you go? Think. Think. Where will you go?

THOROLF: I was thinking perhaps you would shelter me.

VIGDIS: I, Thorolf?

THOROLF: You and Thord.

VIGDIS: And Thord?

THOROLF: I was thinking perhaps you would.

VIGDIS: Against Ingiald?

THOROLF: Until I could get a ship. Only till I could get a ship.

VIGDIS: Against a man like Ingiald?

THOROLF: I know it's a risk, dear. I know it's a risk.

VIGDIS: You know, Thorolf, my man Thord isn't much of a warrior.

THOROLF: It wouldn't be for long, dear. If I could lie low a night or two——

VIGDIS: What should we be, against Ingiald?

THOROLF: If we could just put him off the track, dear, then I could slip down to Broadfirth and get a ship. It would only be a night or two.

VIGDIS: Thord is Thord. And I'm only a woman, and women aren't much good in a case of this sort.

THOROLF: Let me stay, Vigdis. Will you?

VIGDIS: I wish I could think of a plan.

THOROLF: Where else can I go?

VIGDIS: Go? You won't go anywhere. You'll just stay here, where you are. Don't worry yourself about that. It's Ingiald and Thord I'm thinking of.

THOROLF: My God, Vigdis, you're good. I'll kiss you for that.

VIGDIS: Oh, none of your nonsense, now. This is no kissing matter. No, you can't stay in here. Let go my hand, or I'll box your ears. Come this way, now. I'll shut you up in the sheepfold. Quickly, now, before my husband comes. [*Goes out at side door.*]

THOROLF: I've only got to put Ingiald off the track, dear. Old Hrut will get me a ship.

VIGDIS: Put Ingiald off the track first, my friend. We'll think of the ship later. Come along. [*Exeunt.*]

[*The other side door opens, and re-enter* THORD.]

THORD: Vigdis. Vigdis. Is supper ready yet? Now if that isn't too bad. What's the woman thinking of? Vigdis, I say. It's not enough that I have a headache, and get fairly fratted to death, but I'm to be kept waiting for my supper. Vigdis. Vigdis, I say. [*Enter* VIGDIS.]

VIGDIS: What is it, Thord?

THORD: What is it? Supper. Where's supper? Why on earth isn't supper ready?

VIGDIS: I've had a visitor, Thord. A guest.

THORD: A guest, eh. Who invited him?

VIGDIS: No one invited him. He's a sort of a relation of mine.

THORD: So it is a he. How long am I to be tortured with him?

VIGDIS: I'd like him to stay for some time. If you don't mind, Thord.

THORD: You know I mind. You know as well as I do I can't abide strangers in the house. They make this house just like an inn. Except that they never pay for what they have. I

will not put up with it. It's enough that I'm half mad with headache, but I must have a stranger in the house. But there. It's always the way. Who is this stranger? Is he respectable?

VIGDIS: He's a sort of relation of mine. I told you just now.

THORD: A relation. If it had been a stranger I wouldn't have minded; but to have a relation. And I shall have to be civil to him. Vigdis, I do think you might have had a little thought of me. But there. You think of no one but yourself. It's always the way with you women.

VIGDIS: It won't be for long, Thord.

THORD: I tell you what it is, Vigdis. If he's respectable he may stay the night and go on before breakfast. If he's one of these rowdy fellows, or if he's in trouble, I'll not have him near the place. I'll put the dogs on him myself.

VIGDIS: You cannot, Thord. I've already taken him in. I can't go back on my word. I've promised him shelter now.

THORD: Shelter?

VIGDIS: You see he's in trouble.

THORD: What trouble? Who is he, once for all?

VIGDIS: Cousin Thorolf.

THORD: Thorolf! What's he been doing? He's an idle blackguard, Thorolf.

VIGDIS: He's not.

THORD: He is, I say. Don't contradict. What's he been doing?

VIGDIS: There was. . . . It was. . . . It was a fair fight, Thord.

THORD: A—fair—fight. You—don't—mean——

VIGDIS: Down on the beach.

THORD: Not. . . . No. . . . Not Hall?

VIGDIS: Yes. He killed Hall.

THORD: Ingiald's brother.

VIGDIS: Ingiald's brother.

THORD: And you've been such a fool as to take him in. To take in Hall's murderer. Ingiald's brother's murderer.

VIGDIS: It was a fair fight, Thord.

THORD: It—was—a—fair fight. A—fair—fight. Ingiald's brother. A fair fight.

VIGDIS: They fought with swords.

THORD: In my house. Here. Ingiald's brother's murderer. And you've let him in. Where is he?

VIGDIS: In the sheepfold at the back of the house, for the present. That's a good place. They'd never look among the sheep.

THORD: My head is like the seven mills of Milltown. In my house. O, my head. O miserable man. It'll be my death. It's not enough that I must have a headache, and come home tired out, but I must have Ingiald down on me. He'll burn the house. He will. He will. I know Ingiald. He'll burn the house. He's sure to find out. And if he doesn't burn the house he'll put a blood-fine on me. He'll fine me a flock of sheep. It's not enough that I'm fratted to death and find no supper ready, but I must lose my cattle and be murdered in my bed. But there, it's always the way.

VIGDIS: You'll be nothing of the sort. Have pity on poor Thorolf.

THORD: Pity. Let poor Thorolf show a little pity on me. I'm a ruined man. Ingiald will drag me up and down by the hair. He'll hit me in the ribs with his great fists. He will. He will. I know Ingiald. And you go and take in a murderer. A murderer. If it had been a murderer of some common man I wouldn't have minded. But the murderer of Ingiald's brother.

VIGDIS: I tell you it was not a murder. Thorolf's no murderer. He's like a woman in most things, Thorolf is. I tell you it was not a murder. It was a fair fight.

THORD: So Ingiald'll say. Yes, he'll say. I'll take your sheep, he'll say. And them nice cows too, Thord, he'll say. It was a nice fair fight, he'll say, so now I'll burn you in your bed. I know Ingiald. Ahoo. Ahoo.

VIGDIS: Well. I wouldn't be a cry baby. There's worse things than being burned in our beds. Come. Be a man, Thord. One would think you were afraid of dying.

THORD: O, hold your nagging tongue, for God's sake. Ahoo. Ahoo.

VIGDIS: It will all come right, Thord. Look. I'll get you some nice supper.

THORD: You'll drive me mad in another minute. Supper, Ingiald's knife'll be the only supper I shall have. Hold your nagging tongue, and let me die in peace.

VIGDIS: It's very likely that we'll have Ingiald here before long. He's not a man to wait on the road. He comes like an eagle, Ingiald does.

THORD: O what shall I do? What shall I do?

VIGDIS: Do? Put a bold face on it. There's no danger where there's no fear. Look him in the face and tell him to walk out of here.

THORD: He may be coming now. Look out at the door, Vigdis. Is he coming?

VIGDIS: There's someone coming. It's a party of men. A dozen, quite.

THORD: O, I'm not fit to die. I'm not.

VIGDIS: Be a man. They're coming quickly. They'll be here in a minute. Yes. It's Ingiald. There's his red cloak. He's walking ahead of the rest. Be a man now, Thord. It'll be all right.

THORD: O! O!

VIGDIS: Can you think of any better plan than the sheepfold?

THORD: O!

VIGDIS: O, why didn't I marry a man? You don't think he'd look in the sheepfold, with all the sheep in it? I'm sure he wouldn't.

THORD: O, Thorolf's all right. It's myself I'm thinking of. It's myself. O!

VIGDIS: I wonder you aren't ashamed.

THORD: I was getting on so well. I'd have been able to buy Rapp's field next year——

VIGDIS: Think of poor Thorolf. Brace up, man. Ingiald'll suspect at once if he sees you like that. What's your life? What's my life? It's our guest's life that matters.

THORD: An idle vagrant's life better than mine? If it had been the King, now.

VIGDIS: Thord, brace yourself. Thorolf's safe in the sheepfold. Ingiald can prove nothing. Your guest's life depends on

the way you look. Don't flop there like a done-out old gather-up of a bachelor. Swell your chest out. Put a scowl on, like a Viking. That's better. Here they are.

[*A knock at the door.*]

THORD: O, I'm a dead man.

VIGDIS: O, I could shake you. For Thorolf's sake, perk yourself.

[*A knock.*]

Come in. Go and open the door, Thord.

THORD: I can't. How can you ask me to open the door?

[*A knock.*]

VIGDIS: Go on, Thord. Go. Open, man.

THORD: Vigdis. You don't mind. You open. Your nerves aren't like mine.

VIGDIS: Quick, Thord. It's for the host to open.

VOICES: Open within there. Open in the name of the law.

VIGDIS: I must open, then. [*Goes to the door.*] Come in, come in.

[*Enter* INGIALD *and* MEN-AT-ARMS]

INGIALD: God save all here. Thank you, Vigdis.

VIGDIS: My man's not quite himself, to-night, Lord Ingiald.

INGIALD: I'm sorry to hear that. What pin pricks now, Thord?

THORD: Ah. Oh.

INGIALD: [*Looking keenly at both of them.*] I should have thought life was pretty quiet up here. No fighting. No gambling. No anxiety——

VIGDIS: My man gets run down, Lord Ingiald. It's going to these fairs that does it. I've known him come home in a way of speaking, and he'd be all cold, like a dead man. It's the nerves and that on the brain. [*A pause.*] What could I do for you, Lord Ingiald? Will you not sit down? Is there anything you would like to take? It's not often we see you up here. Why, I don't think I've seen you, not since last October twelve month.

INGIALD: No. I daresay not. [*He goes over to* THORD *and bangs him on the shoulder.*]

THORD: Ow. What is it, Ingiald? Don't.

INGIALD: I want to have a talk with you, my friend.

THORD: A—a talk. O yes. Yes, that. Yes. Very nice.

INGIALD: [*To his men.*] Go out and stand by the door. Don't budge till I tell you.

MEN: Ay, ay, sir.

[*Exeunt*]

VIGDIS: Wouldn't your men be pleased to take a drop of something? You've surely not come all the way from Sheep Isles. What is it we could do for you, Lord Ingiald? Perhaps you would let me hear it. My man's not himself to-night. Were you wanting any hands to help get your harvest in? Tell me what it is.

INGIALD: Thank you, Vigdis. I want to have a talk with Thord, here.

THORD: I—I'm so ill, Ingiald. It's the weather. Vigdis will do any business. My head. My head is bad. I'm a martyr to my head in wet weather.

INGIALD: I know what it is. My own head gives me tortures.

But I must have a talk with you. Perhaps you would ask your wife to mull me a little ale?

VIGDIS: You must let me mull it in here, then. The kitchen fire's out.

INGIALD: I should be delighted; but my nerves can't bear the smell of ale being mulled. It always upsets me. [*To* THORD.] Perhaps you would ask your wife to—to look at the sunset. Most beautiful sunset, outside.

VIGDIS: Yes, we were looking at it this last half hour.

INGIALD: I see. Well. Vigdis. I must talk to Thord here privately. Will you go into the next room? I won't keep you long.

VIGDIS: Certainly, Lord Ingiald. Now, I won't have you telling my man about any of those naughty baggages at Reykjavik. He knows quite enough, already.

INGIALD: I won't mention a single baggage. [*He calls to a* SOLDIER.] Erik, just attend the lady for a moment. [*Aside to* SOLDIER.] See she doesn't leave the room.

VIGDIS: I know you men. [*She tries to catch* THORD'S *eye.*] I'll make him repeat every word you say. [*She goes out unconcernedly.*]

INGIALD: [*Aside.*] Well. If you're not a wonder. [*Sharply.*] Now, Thord, my friend, I've got only one thing to say to you. Where's Thorolf?

THORD: Thorolf.

INGIALD: Well?

THORD: Which Thorolf would that be?

INGIALD: You know quite well which Thorolf.

THORD: O, you mean old Thorolf of the Ridge? Ah yes. A fat man. He——

INGIALD: Now, Thord. [*Glares at him.*]

THORD: O, young Thorolf. Koll o' Dales' lad. He goes to school, now.

INGIALD: [*Rapping the table.*] Thord.

THORD: Don't, Ingiald. You put a fellow out so.

INGIALD: Where's Thorolf? Vigdis's cousin. Your cousin, Thorolf.

THORD: Ha, ha, ha! *That* Thorolf. Yes. An idle blackguard. Yes.

INGIALD: Yes. That Thorolf. Where is he?

THORD: I've not seen him, Ingiald.

INGIALD: I suppose you've not heard about him, either?

THORD: No.

INGIALD: Not? Sure?

THORD: No. I mean yes. Of course I've heard about him.

INGIALD: About what he has done to-day?

THORD: I didn't know he did anything to-day.

INGIALD: You heard about my brother?

THORD: Your poor brother, Hall? Yes, I was truly grieved. I was quite upset.

INGIALD: That's what Thorolf did.

THORD: Thorolf?

INGIALD: Now where is he?

THORD: Your brother?

INGIALD: I see. You won't answer.

THORD: Now don't be hasty, Ingiald. You're so hasty. You don't give me a chance. What is it you want to know?

INGIALD: Where is Thorolf?

THORD: I've not seen him, Ingiald. How should I know where Thorolf is?

INGIALD: He was seen coming towards this house.

THORD: Towards this house?

INGIALD: Only an hour ago.

THORD: Thorolf?

INGIALD: No more talk, my friend. Where is he?

THORD: I don't know, Ingiald. I don't know.

INGIALD: You lying knave. You creeping worm. You dog of——. I'll ram this scabbard down your throat. You say you don't know. Where is he? Any more of your lies and I'll squeeze your lying tongue off.

THORD: Don't, Ingiald. Don't. You're hurting. Don't, man.

INGIALD: Well. No more of your lies, then.

THORD: Now you've hurt me. I shall have a sore throat for a week.

INGIALD: Do you good. [*A pause.*] Now then, Thorolf's here. Isn't he? Hey?

THORD: Yes, Ingiald.

INGIALD: I thought we should come to it sooner or later.

See what comes of being patient. So he's here. Hidden somewhere?

THORD: Yes, Ingiald.

INGIALD: Where is he hidden?

THORD: O, but I couldn't tell you that. If I told you that I'd have to leave the country. No one would speak to me, if I told you that.

INGIALD: That's nothing to do with me. Now then. Where is he?

THORD: O, I couldn't.

INGIALD Hey?

THORD: I'd have to leave this farm. Have mercy, Ingiald.

INGIALD: Mercy, eh?

THORD: I couldn't bear it. I'm not strong, Ingiald. My head.

INGIALD: D'ye see this little knife of mine?

THORD: O, don't, Ingiald. Ingiald, you don't mean. Ingiald, I'd have to leave the country if I told you.

INGIALD: Look here, Thord. I'm going to get Thorolf before I go. Let's understand each other.

THORD: O, yes, Ingiald. I'll do anything. I'll say anything. But I can't tell you where he is. I can't. I'd have to leave the country.

INGIALD: Well. You needn't tell me where he is. Not in so many words. D'ye understand?

THORD: O, Ingiald.

INGIALD: Let's come to some arrangement. You don't want

your neighbours to call you a traitor. I understand that. You don't want me to burn your house down, or to stick this knife into you. I understand that, too. Well. You give up Thorolf to me quietly.

THORD: I can't, Ingiald. They'd know. They'd know. Vigdis would tell them.

INGIALD: I don't say "betray him," you silly gowk.

THORD: But what then, Ingiald?

INGIALD: Give me some hint where he is, so that I can find him. I'll pretend to search the house, and light on him, as it were, by chance. Come now.

THORD: But——

INGIALD: Come now. D'ye see this bag? [*Produces a purse.*]

THORD: Yes.

INGIALD: D'ye hear it? Eh? Chink. Eh? Chink? Where is he?

THORD: I couldn't.

INGIALD: Come now. Hark? Three silver marks. Eh? Just whisper. Where? Come now.

THORD: Three silver marks.

INGIALD: Three silver marks. You needn't say it right out. Hear it jingle.

THORD: It's a lot of money.

INGIALD: You could do with it, eh? Come now, old man, where is he?

THORD: Let me weigh it in my hand.

INGIALD: Certainly. Here you are. Now then. Whisper

here. Where is he? Tell me where he is. Where is he? Is he in the chest here?

THORD: No, not in the chest.

INGIALD: No? What is in the chest?

THORD: Things of Vigdis's.

INGIALD: Is he upstairs, then? Eh? Upstairs?

THORD: No. He's not upstairs.

INGIALD: Outside? Eh?

THORD: [*Putting the bag on the table.*] Ingiald.

INGIALD: Yes. Well. What is it?

THORD: You won't take it to heart my hiding him?

INGIALD: No. No. Of course I won't.

THORD: Swear you won't. You won't fine me? Nor take my cattle?

INGIALD: Not if you tell me where he is.

THORD: You'll search the house first, Ingiald. In pretence?

INGIALD: Yes. I'll pretend to search the house. And then?

THORD: You see that door there?

INGIALD: Yes. Yes. What then?

THORD: You must go through that door. No. No. Go through *this* door, and then round the house.

INGIALD: Yes? Where to? Among the ricks?

THORD: No. Not among the ricks.

INGIALD: In the dairy?

THORD: You might look in the dairy.

INGIALD: Where else, eh?

THORD: Just to the left of the dairy.

INGIALD: The cowbyre, eh?

THORD: No. No. You might look in the cowbyre, though.

INGIALD: Where else?

THORD: Ingiald.

INGIALD: Yes.

THORD: Swear you won't tell anyone. Swear you won't say I told you.

INGIALD: Of course I won't tell anyone.

THORD: You might count the sheep. You understand?

INGIALD: To the left of the dairy, eh?

THORD: To the left of the dairy.

INGIALD: I'll see them counted. Thank 'ee, Thord.

THORD: Now, you'll pretend to look upstairs?

INGIALD: Yes. We'll let in Vigdis, now.

THORD: No, not Vigdis, no.

INGIALD: Yes, man. Hey there. Erik!

ERIK: Sir.

INGIALD: Tell the lady to come in.

ERIK: Tell the lady to come in, sir. You may go in now, mum.

[*Enter* VIGDIS]

VIGDIS: Well. Have you had a nice talk?

INGIALD: No. Not so nice as I could have wished, perhaps. Your husband's very low to-night. Excuse me a moment. Hi there. Hrapp, Hoskuld.

SOLDIERS: [*Entering.*] Sir. Sir.

INGIALD: I'm sorry, Vigdis. But I must search the house. Your husband has given me permission. I must look through all the rooms.

VIGDIS: Search my house, indeed.

INGIALD: I won't disarrange it more than can be helped.

VIGDIS: Search my house, indeed. For what will you search my house?

INGIALD: For your cousin, Thorolf.

VIGDIS: My—cousin—Thorolf. And why should you want my cousin Thorolf, I should like to know?

INGIALD Come, Vigdis, I'm sorry. Now don't let's have a scene.

VIGDIS: A scene, indeed. And why should you have a scene? I'm not going to have my house pulled to pieces.

INGIALD: They won't do any harm, Vigdis.

VIGDIS: Harm or no harm, I won't have anyone spying around in my house. I never heard of such impudence. This is *my* house. It isn't Thorolf's house. What d'ye want Thorolf for?

INGIALD: You know perfectly well, Vigdis, what I want Thorolf for.

VIGDIS: [*To* THORD.] And I'm to be insulted in my own house! I wonder you sit there and let your wife be insulted. As for you, Ingiald, for all your lordship, you never had more manners than one brought up in a pigstye. It is what I might

expect from you. But as for you, Thord, I'm ashamed of you. Defend your wife, man. Don't let these louts throw the whole house overboard.

INGIALD: [*To his men.*] Upstairs with you. Search every room in the house.

VIGDIS: How dare you insult a woman so? You great captains want humbling. If I were a man now, you wouldn't dare.

ERIK: [*To* INGIALD.] Beg pardon, captain.

INGIALD: What is it?

ERIK: That box, captain. [*Points to chest.*]

INGIALD: Well. What about it?

ERIK: I was thinking he might be in that box.

INGIALD: O, nonsense. Upstairs with you.

[*They all run upstairs*]

[*To* THORD.] You come, too, Thord. If anything's missing you'll blame my men.

THORD: [*Aside.*] Let Vigdis go, Ingiald. Take Vigdis.

INGIALD: [*Glancing at her.*] No. She suspects nothing. You come.

THORD: No. I don't think she suspects. No, she suspects nothing.

VIGDIS: Where are you going, Thord?

THORD: Upstairs with Ingiald.

VIGDIS: Am I married to a man or to a bleating old sheep with the staggers? Do you call yourself a human being, Thord? [*Aside.*] What's Ingiald going to do?

INGIALD: Come, Thord. Come on, now.

THORD: [*To* VIGDIS.] Get supper ready. Don't stand there.

[*Exit with* INGIALD]

VIGDIS: Get supper ready. Get supper ready. What's he going to do? Why didn't Thord give me a hint? He'll search the sheepfold. Of course he'll search the sheepfold. He'll be going to the fold in another minute. Why did I leave him in the sheepfold? Why did I let him stay at all? What can I do? What can I do? He'll be down in a minute. What's this bag of money? What's this bag of money? Thord's sold him. It's blood money, I know it. What can I do? O God. What can I do?

THORD: [*Above.*] Vigdis.

VIGDIS: Yes, Thord.

THORD: All right. Nothing. I only wanted to know if you were there.

VIGDIS: What can I do? I know. I know. It's a bare chance. It's a bare chance.

[*She runs softly and swiftly from the room.*]

[*In two seconds she returns with* THOROLF]

[*Noise above, and shouts*]

VIGDIS: Quiet. Quiet. Not a whisper.

THOROLF: What shall I do?

VIGDIS: Not a whisper.

THORD: [*Above.*] Vigdis. Are you there still?

VIGDIS: I'm still here, Thord. What's the matter with you? Into the chest, Thorolf. Get into the chest. [*She opens chest.*]

THOROLF: [*Kissing her.*] Good-bye, in case, Vigdis.

VIGDIS: O you silly boy. Get in. I must lock you in. Don't sneeze, for God's sake. Press your upper lip if you want to

sneeze. It's a bare chance, Thorolf. [*She locks the chest on him and takes key. Then she hurriedly and softly puts bread and beer upon the table as for supper.*]

[*Re-enter* INGIALD, THORD, *and* SOLDIERS]

VIGDIS: Well, my lord. Did you find my cousin Thorolf by any chance?

INGIALD: I've not finished looking yet.

VIGDIS: Haven't you? You might look on the dresser there. I would if I were you. Or in the oven. Yes, look in the oven, Ingiald. Show him the oven, Thord.

INGIALD: [*To some of his men.*] Step into the kitchen, and look in the oven. You. Come with me the rest of you. We must look through the farmyard.

VIGDIS: Don't disturb your elder brother, Ingiald.

INGIALD: What elder brother?

VIGDIS: The donkey.

INGIALD: Ah, you're funny, Vigdis. Well, he laughs best who laughs last, *I* say.

[*Exit with* MEN]

VIGDIS: Thord. Thord Goddi.

THORD: Yes, Vigdis.

VIGDIS: What's this bag of money, here?

THORD: Bag of money?

VIGDIS: This bag of money here. What is it?

THORD: It's what I brought from market.

VIGDIS: It's nothing of the sort.

THORD: Oh no. Nor it is.

VIGDIS: Well?

THORD: Well? I suppose Ingiald left it there when he came in.

VIGDIS: Did you see Ingiald leave it there? O, what am I thinking of? [*Aside.*]

THORD: Now for Heaven's sake stop nagging. Hark!

VIGDIS: What is it?

THORD: I thought I heard a noise in the yard. A cry.

VIGDIS: My God. A cry. [*They go to the door.*]

THORD: I hope they won't find him.

VIGDIS: Thank God I did what I could for him. O, may Heaven blind them.

THORD: I'm afraid they're sure to find him. What was that?

VIGDIS: My God. They're brave, aren't they, thirteen to one?

THORD: Didn't you hear a sort of groan then?

VIGDIS: Poor Thorolf. Poor Thorolf.

THORD: We did our best, Vigdis.

VIGDIS: Yes. May God always help you, Thord, as well as you helped Thorolf!

THORD: Yes, I shall always be glad I did my best for him.

VIGDIS: Yes, Thord. I suppose you will be. I hope you will be.

THORD: Poor fellow.

VIGDIS: Poor Thorolf.

THORD: Don't take on, Vigdis. We must all die. Ah. Ah. Come away from the door. Come. [*Cries without.*]

VIGDIS: [*Covering her eyes.*] O, my dear, my dear. O Thorolf, little brown-haired Thorolf.

THORD: There. There. It's all over now.

VIGDIS: O my Thorolf, my cousin Thorolf.

THORD: There. There. Now don't take on. Don't take on; you get on my nerves when you cry like that.

VIGDIS: O, you had brown hair, Thorolf. Bonny hair you had. O my boy, my poor cousin. [*Cries without.*]

THORD: [*Aside.*] They've got him. They've got him. [*He rubs his hands.*] We all owe Heaven a death. Poor Thorolf. Poor fellow. And him so young.

VIGDIS: It was a sight for sore eyes on a sunny morning to see him going over the hills. O Thorolf, you were the joy of a woman's eyes. You were as stately as a stag. You were as comely as a king's darling. O my boy, my poor cousin, my own dear, my heart's darling, Thorolf!

THORD: And him so young. And such a promising young fellow. To be cut short. Life is but a span. And him so young. Idle, vicious, drunken blackguard, it's a good job you are cut short. [*More noise without.*]

VIGDIS: He had soft brown hair with threads of gold in it like the bright bird's feathers. Now it's dabbled with blood, dabbled with blood, dabbled with blood.

THORD: Dabbled with blood. O! O me!

VIGDIS: O young man, O treasure of the west, O white, comely, handsome Thorolf! Yours will be a cold bride bed under the winter grass.

THORD: O, do for Heaven's sake be quiet.

VIGDIS: A cold bed, a lonely bed, a white bed.

THORD: You'll waste none of our sheets, laying of him out. Let me tell you that.

VIGDIS: Three white lonely candles in a draught, three flames guttering, but you will lie still beneath them, Thorolf.

THORD: Vigdis. Do you want to drive me mad? Have done now.

VIGDIS: O bonny Thorolf. Swimming and rowing and going among young men you were like a king. None could sail a boat like you. No queen ever loosed her hair about a lovelier lover than you. You were courteous, you were kind, you had strength and beauty, you were brave; now you will lie in the ground, and the sheep will crop the grass there.

THORD: Here. Vigdis. A little of that goes a long way. Thorolf's dead. Here's Ingiald coming back. Hold your noise now, for Heaven's sake.

[*Re-enter* INGIALD *with* MEN]

INGIALD: I've a bone to pick with you, Thord.

VIGDIS: Bring me my dead. Give me my dead, you butchers, you bloody men.

INGIALD: D'ye hear?

VIGDIS: Thirteen to one. Thirteen to one. You butchers. You bloody men. Bring me my dead. Bring me my dead darling. You cowards. You cowards.

INGIALD: What's wrong with *you*, Vigdis?

VIGDIS: Let me look upon the boy's dead face. You butchers. O fair, white face. O white face with the red blood upon it. O my boy, my dear boy, Thorolf.

INGIALD: He'll be a white face when I get him and that's a fact, Vigdis. I'll promise you that much. Thord, I'll wring your ears off.

VIGDIS: Where is my dead lad? You dogs. You butchers. Take me to his corpse.

INGIALD: Your dead lad? There's no dead lad.

VIGDIS: Not dead. O, Heaven! [*Pretends to swoon.*]

THORD: What?

INGIALD: I'll tell you what, you creeping rot. You cur. You Judas. What have you done with him?

THORD: Done with him?

INGIALD: With Thorolf. Eh. Where is he? Eh? What have you done with him?

THORD: I've done nothing, Ingiald. Nothing.

INGIALD: Don't tell me you've done nothing.

THORD: I didn't do anything with him.

INGIALD: You lying knave. D'ye dare to sit there and say you haven't got him off?

THORD: I haven't got him off.

INGIALD: You lie.

THORD: How could I have got him off?

INGIALD: How? How do I know how? But I'll know how. I'll flay you alive. I'll skin you and salt you. I'll—I'll—I'll—

THORD: O, don't. Ingiald, I swear—I swear I thought you'd get him.

INGIALD: I tell you, you've got him off.

THORD: I haven't, Ingiald.

INGIALD: [*To his men.*] Look at him. Look at this liar, here. I come here to this liar and tell him I want Thorolf. And he cringes and whines and licks my boots. So I just speak to him kindly, like a father. I'm always kindly and like a father. I'm too kind. And he cringes and whines, and begs me not to hit him. Only spare my precious hide, he says, and I'll tell you where Thorolf is.

THE MEN: Hear that now. He betrayed him, etc.

INGIALD: Then he wants a little money, for saying where Thorolf is. The money on the table there. Three marks of silver, no less. He'd sell his own mother for a little money. Wouldn't you, eh?

THORD: I wouldn't.

INGIALD: You would, you know it. Three marks of silver you begged. And then you told me to look in the sheepfold.

THE MEN: Treacherous swine. His own cousin. His own cousin.

INGIALD: And then he sneaks his man off while we're rummaging in the wrong place. And now he expects me to be out three marks of silver.

THE MEN: Tie him to the bull's tail, master; and let's hunt him.

INGIALD: So you'd sell your cousin, would you, and then try to go back on your bargain? [*Going to him.*] Where have you taken Thorolf to? Eh?

THORD: He was in the sheepfold where I told you, Ingiald. He was. Indeed he was.

INGIALD: O! Was he? And where is he now? Gone to Olaf's, I suppose.

THORD: He may have gone to Olaf's.

THE MEN: Olaf's is a likely place. We'd better go on there at once.

INGIALD: Lord help you, Thord, if we don't get him. Understand? I mean it. Come on there.

A MAN: You never looked in that chest yet, captain.

INGIALD: O yes, that chest. [*He tries lid.*] Where's the key, Thord?

THORD: Ask Vigdis.

INGIALD: Where's the key of this chest, Vigdis?

VIGDIS: Key of the chest, indeed. Who are you to ask for my keys? I'm not going to have you spying in my chests. You and your gang have done harm enough here. You'll get no key. Let that be enough.

INGIALD: Come now. The key.

VIGDIS: I tell you, you shall not have the key.

THE MEN: Break it open, captain.

A MAN: O, let the chest alone. Thorolf'll be safe at Olaf's if we don't hurry.

INGIALD: Give me the key.

THORD: Give up the key at once.

VIGIDIS: I tell you, you shall not have the key. You've thrown the house overboard as it is. Get out now. Go.

INGIALD: Give me that key at once, Vigdis.

VIGDIS: [*Flinging key on floor.*] Take it then, and bad luck go with it. Here it is. Now open.

INGIALD: [*Giving it back.*] Thank you. That's all I wanted. Now, Thord. Give back that bag of money.

THORD: O Ingiald, you gave it to me.

INGIALD: Now you will give it back.

THORD: O Ingiald.

VIGDIS: Give it, Thord. Give it, you Judas, you. D'ye think I'll have blood money in the house? Give it up at once.

[*The* MEN *go out and linger at the door*]

INGIALD: Come on now.

VIGDIS: [*Taking money bag.*] I've only one thing to say to you, Ingiald. I say, take your money and get out of my house, now. [*She makes him back to the door.*] Take your dirty blood money. [*She smites him over the face with the money bag and drives him out. She watches them go.*] Go on to Olaf's with you, and try some other Judas. That's all I've to say to you, my lord. [*She turns and unlocks chest. Then, instead of opening, she turns to look at Thord. Thord goes to door and looks out, comes back and sits on chest. Vigdis backs away from him.*]

THORD: Well. They've gone. [*A pause.*] They've gone. [*No answer.*] Can't you answer when I speak to you?

VIGDIS: Yes. I can answer. Listen to me, Thord Goddi. You and I will part from now. You took money to betray Thorolf, your guest and my cousin. I always knew you for a mean man. Now I know you are base, and a dastard, and a dog. God forgive me, I once loved you. Pah. I let you kiss me. I held you in my arms. There. There. There. Take it. [*She flings her wedding ring at him.*] Now we'll part, my sir. I thank God I never bore you a child.

THORD: [*Laughing nervously.*] I've got a headache. I can't—Ow—[*The chest lid rises.* THORD *leaps from it.* THOROLF *appears.*] Thorolf!

THOROLF: Thorolf!

THORD: Thorolf, I didn't mean—I swear I didn't. I didn't mean. It was only a joke. I'll explain.

THOROLF: Thord. Pah. You're not worth it.

THORD: O Thorolf. You shall have—I'll give you my money. All of it———

THOROLF: Pah. Vigdis, my dear, where are they?

VIGDIS: They've gone, Thorolf. We can slip away to Broadfirth now. It's quite safe. Come. Come. We'll go together, my friend. [*They turn to go.*]

THORD: I'll change my religion.

CURTAIN

Written in 1906.

THE TRAGEDY OF NAN

Tragedy at its best is a vision of the heart of life. The heart of life can only be laid bare in the agony and exultation of dreadful acts. The vision of agony, or spiritual contest, pushed beyond the limits of the dying personality, is exalting and cleansing. It is only by such vision that a multitude can be brought to the passionate knowledge of things exulting and eternal.

Commonplace people dislike tragedy, because they dare not suffer and cannot exult. The truth and rapture of man are holy things, not lightly to be scorned. A carelessness of life and beauty marks the glutton, the idler and the fool in their deadly path across history.

The poetic impulse of the Renaissance is now spent. The poetic drama, the fruit of that impulse, is now dead. Until a new poetic impulse gathers, playwrights trying for beauty must try to create new forms in which beauty and the high things of the soul may pass from the stage to the mind. Our playwrights have all the powers except that power of exultation which comes from a delighted brooding on excessive, terrible things. That power is seldom granted to man; twice or thrice to a race perhaps, not oftener. But it seems to me certain that every effort, however humble, towards the achieving of that power helps the genius of a race to obtain it, though the obtaining may be fifty years after the strivers are dead.

This country tragedy was written at Greenwich in February, March, and September, 1907. Part of it is based upon something which happened (as I am told) in Kent about a century ago. As I am ignorant of Kentish country people I placed the action among a people and in a place well known to me.

JOHN MASEFIELD.

4th April, 1911.

TO

W. B. YEATS

THE TRAGEDY OF NAN

PERSONS	PLAYED BY
JENNY PARGETTER	*Miss Mary Jerrold*
MRS. PARGETTER	*Mrs. A. B. Tapping*
WILLIAM PARGETTER	*Mr. Horace Hodges*
NAN HARDWICK	*Miss Lillah McCarthy*
DICK GURVIL	*Mr. A. E. Anson*
ARTIE PEARCE	*Mr. Percy Gawthorn*
GAFFER PEARCE	*Mr. R. H. Hignett*
TOMMY ARKER	*Mr. Allan Wade*
ELLEN	*Miss Marion Nugent*
SUSAN	*Miss Bokenham*
THE REV. MR. DREW	*Mr. Edmund Gurney*
CAPTAIN DIXON	*Mr. H. Athol Forde*
THE CONSTABLE	*Mr. Christmas Grose*

This play was produced by the Pioneers at the New Royalty Theatre, on 24th May, 1908, under the direction of Mr. H. Granville Barker. At its revival as a matinee at the Haymarket Theatre, in June, 1908, the part of the Rev. Mr. Drew was played by Mr. Cecil Brooking.

THE TRAGEDY OF NAN

ACT I

SCENE: *A kitchen in the house of a small tenant farmer at Broad Oak, on Severn.* 1810.

[MRS. PARGETTER *and* JENNY *rolling dough and cutting apples.*]
[JENNY *takes flour from cupboard.*]

JENNY: It do seem quiet 'ere, Mother, after service.

MRS. P.: P'raps now I'll 'ave some quiet.

JENNY: Only think, Mother, the ladies 'ad cups of tea in bed of a morning.

MRS. P.: P'raps now you're come 'ome, I'll 'ave my cup of tea, it's time I'd a little something after all I gone through.

JENNY: Why, Mother?

MRS. P.: What with that girl—Mooning round with 'er great eyes.

JENNY: Do 'ee mean Cousin Nan, Mother?

MRS. P.: Mind your work. I wish them groceries'd come.

JENNY: Us'll 'ardly 'ave the things ready, Mother. Company be coming at dark.

MRS. P.: Things'll 'ave to be ready. 'Old your tongue.

JENNY: 'Oo be coming, Mother, besides Dick Gurvil?

MRS. P.: Young Artie Pearce, wold Gaffer Pearce, them girls o' Robertses, and Tommy Arker.

JENNY: Us shall be quite a pearty, shan't us?

HOLBROOK LIBRARY
PACIFIC SCHOOL
OF

MRS. P.: It won't be much of a pearty to me, with that Nan in the room. She tokens 'er dad too much.

JENNY: Why, Mother?

MRS. P.: Always so prim and well be'aved, thinking 'erself so much better than anyone.

JENNY: Ah!

MRS. P.: Always 'elping 'er friends as she calls them.

JENNY: 'Elpin' them, Mother?

MRS. P.: Barthin' their brats for 'em. 'Oo knows what dirt they've been playing in? Or mending their linen. Flying in the face of Providence. She might bring us all the fever. [*Going over to get a chair.*] 'Ow many more times am I to tell yer I won't 'ave your things left about? Look 'ere at this chair.

JENNY: What be it, Mother?

MRS. P.: Look 'ere at your coat. 'Oo's to get you a new coat when this is wore out? I will 'ave you careful. Every day of my life I'm putting your clothes away. Idle lawkamercy girl—

JENNY: That ben't mine, Mother. That be Cousin Nan's.

MRS. P.: It's a wonder you couldn't say so at once. Oh! so it's 'ers, is it. Wot's she got in 'er pockets, I wonder. [*Looks in pockets.*] Wot's 'ere. Oh! ribbons for our white neck, indeed. Wot's 'ere. Ho, indeed. [*Taking paper.*]

JENNY: Wot's that, Mother, a letter?

MRS. P.: So this is wot's up, is it? [*She glances at paper.*]

JENNY: [*Peeping.*] It looks like Dick Gurvil's 'and, Mother——

MRS. P.: You 'eed your duty. [*Puts paper in her own pocket.*]

I'll give it 'er. 'Ere, out of my way. None of your rags in my way. [*Flinging coat into a corner.*]

JENNY: Oh, Mother, it's gone into the pigwash.

MRS. P.: Wot if it 'as?

JENNY: She won't be able to wear it again, Mother. Never.

MRS. P.: Let 'er go cold. Learn 'er not to leave 'er things about. Where are you going now?

JENNY: I was just going to hang it out, Mother.

MRS. P.: Don't you dare to touch it. Stand 'ere and do your work. Let that dirty gallus bird do 'er own chores.

JENNY: Whatever do 'ee mean, Mother?

MRS. P.: A gallus bird; that's all she is.

JENNY: Cousin Nan, Mother. Why do 'ee call 'er that?

MRS. P.: Oh, p'raps your Father 'aven't a-told you.

JENNY: No, Mother.

MRS. P.: Run and see if that be Dick with the groceries.

JENNY: [*Goes to window.*] No, Mother.

MRS. P.: Drat 'im. Well, this mustn't go beyond yer—it ain't to be known about. 'Er father—your Cousin Nan's father —wot married your father's sister——

JENNY: Yes, Mother.

MRS. P.: Don't interrup' when your Mother's talking to yer. 'Er father, as she's so stuck on— 'E was 'ung.

JENNY: 'Ung, Mother?

MRS. P.: At Glorster ja-il.

JENNY: Whatever 'ad 'e gone for to do?

MRS. P.: 'E stole a sheep. That's wot 'e did.

JENNY: And so 'e were 'ung.

MRS. P.: There's a thing to 'appen in a family.

JENNY: So be that why Nan come 'ere?

MRS. P.: Thanks to your father.

JENNY: I didn't think, when I left service I should 'sociate with no gallus birds.

MRS. P.: Nor you wouldn't if your father was in 'is right mind. The Lord 'ath laid a 'eavy judgmink on your father. Wot 'e wants with 'er I can't think.

JENNY: Her may remind he of Auntie.

MRS. P.: 'E's no call to be reminded of any woman, 'cept 'er the Lord 'ath bound to 'im. Wot I gorn through with that Nan in the 'ouse'd a kill a Zebedee. They do say they be 'ard to kill.

JENNY: 'Ere be Father coming.

MRS. P.: 'E 'as 'is lunch of a mornin' now. Take 'is cider off the 'ob.

JENNY: Where's 'is bread and cheese? [*She takes mug off hob, looks about carelessly, and drops and smashes mug on hearth.*]

MRS. P.: There now.

JENNY: Oh, Mother, I've broke it.

MRS. P.: What a clumsy 'and you 'ave.

JENNY: It's Father's fav'rit mug. O Mother, whatever will 'e say.

MRS. P.: 'Ere. Get upstairs. Get into the next room.

JENNY: Whatever will 'e say! 'E will be mad. (*Cries.*)

MRS. P.: I'll talk 'im round. There! It's all a accident. Quick! before 'e comes now.

JENNY: 'E will be that mad! A dear, a dear! (*Goes out.*)

MRS. P.: [*Taking out letter.*] So this is wot it's come to: [*Declaiming.*] Dick Gurvil to 'is fond beloved:

> "As I was a-walking a lady I did meet
> I knew it for my true love by the roses on 'er cheek
> The roses on 'er cheek so sweetly did grow
> My 'eart out of my bosom, like a engine did go."

I'll watch yer Master Dick.

[*Enter* MR. PARGETTER, *walking with a stick. He is an old, shortish thick-set man, still hale.*]

MR. P.: [*Advancing towards* MRS. P. *and gravely saluting.*] Well, Mother.

MRS. P.: Did you see the fiddler?

MR. P.: I saw the fiddler.

MRS. P.: Is 'e coming to-night?

MR. P.: 'E is coming. Us be going to 'ave great wonders to-night. 'Ot mutton parsty pies.

MRS. P.: You won't eat of no 'ot mutton parsty pies. You know 'ow that sheep died as well as I do. 'E was *oovy*. [*Pause.*] A apple parsty's no great wonders.

MR. P.: A fiddler *and* a apple parsty's wonders.

MRS. P.: It'll fare to be a girt wonder if th' apple parsty be set. The amount of 'elp I get in the 'ousework——

MR. P.: At it again.

MRS. P.: Yes, I am at it again, as you call it.

MR. P.: What is it, now?

MRS. P.: 'Ow much longer 'ave I got to put up with that Nan in the 'ouse?

MR. P.: My niece Nan'll stay in this 'ouse till—till I go to churchyard. Or—till she marries. [*A pause.*] Now you know my mind. The girl's a good girl, if you'd let up in your naggin' 'er 'ed off.

MRS. P.: Naggin', Will?

MR. P.: 'Ow's any girl to be good with you naggin' 'er 'ed off all day long.

MRS. P.: When did I ever nag, as you call it?

MR. P.: When? 'Ave you ever give 'er a kind word since she come 'ere.

MRS. P.: I 'ave my 'eavenly warrant for all I done, Will. Them as the Lord afflicts we must come out from and be ye separate.

MR. P.: I wonder the Lord can let you prosper, talking like that.

MRS. P.: 'E knows 'is own, Will. You mark my words.

MR. P.: I will mark 'em. And you mark mine. You'll treat my niece Nan as you'd treat your daughter Jenny.

MRS. P.: Our daughter Jenny is the child of respectable parents. That—that charity girl is the daughter of——

MR. P.: My sister. That's 'oo she's the daughter of.

MRS. P.: And a thief 'oo was 'ung. I've always been respect-

able; and I've always kep' my girl respectable. I will not 'ave to do with the common and the unclean.

MR. P.: You'll 'ave Nan 'ere, and you'll stop your nagging jealous tongue.

MRS. P.: Jealous?

MR. P.: Yes, jealous. You make 'er life a burden acos she tokens my sister. You was sweet on 'er dad yourself. That's why you make 'er life a burden.

MRS. P.: Ho, indeed! Ha, ha, ha! Wot notions.

MR. P.: That's the truth though. I know yer. I seen somethink of yer in these twenty years.

MRS. P.: 'Ark you to me, Will Pargetter. Could you look on and see your daughter wronged?

MR. P.: What's that got to do with it?

MRS. P.: I'll tell you. When first we 'ad that charity girl 'ere——

MR. P.: You call 'er Nan. Wot are you waivin' that bit of paper at me for?

MRS. P.: We 'ad 'opes as our Jenny'd marry Dick Gurvil soon as she come back from service.

MR. P.: That depended on Dick, not on Jenny.

MRS. P.: Oh, but Dick was no difficulty. They kep' company before Jenny went to service. Dick was sweet on 'er all right.

MR. P.: Dick was sweet on twenty girls.

MRS. P.: No. Since that—that idle mooner come 'ere—Dick's been sweet on *'er*. Look 'ere. Look at this. [*Shows letter.*]

MR. P.: I don't want no letter. Put it where yer got it.

That's the best thing I ever 'eard of Dick. Dick wants a wife with sense.

MRS. P.: You'll let 'er marry 'im, after 'is carrying on along o' Jenny. And break your own daughter's 'art.

MR. P.: Jenny's got no 'art.

MRS. P.: Jenny'd resolve 'er 'eavenly crown for Dick Gurvil. 'Ow dare you blacken your own child?

MR. P.: Blacken 'er. She's a cold 'eartless little baggage, Jenny is. Our Nan's worth a 'undred of 'er.

MRS. P.: And you expect me to see that great-eyed, ugly, scrawf marrying my daughter's man.

MR. P.: He's not your daughter's man. Dick's everybody's daughter's man. If 'e steps up and marries our Nan—it'll be the making of 'im. Give me my lunch.

MRS. P.: Ah! I was forgetting. You put me out of patience. I'm afraid I spoke 'asty, Will. I've a 'asty tongue [*with suavity*].

MR. P.: There, there! Where's my vittles?

[*She puts down bread and cheese*]

[PARGETTER *gets up to fetch mug from the hob*]

MR. P.: Thank ye, Mother. [*He sees the mug broken.*] Law, Mother. You 'aven't a broke my Toby.

MRS. P.: There, there now, Will, it was a accidenk.

MR. P.: Not my Toby, broken?

MRS. P.: It was a accidenk. [*She picks up the pieces.*]

MR. P.: 'Ooever 'ave a broke my Toby. Why weren't I told to onst?

MRS. P.: She were goin' to tell yer, she said.

MR. P.: Not—not Nan? It wasn't Nan broke it?

MRS. P.: 'Er said 'er'd tell you to onst. It was a accidenk.

MR. P.: But no accidenk could a broke my Toby.

MRS. P.: There, there. Us'll buy another's good as 'er.

MR. P.: But I've a 'ad my zider outen ov 'er this fifty year, like my gran'fer 'ave a done. I'd a value for that Toby.

MRS. P.: 'Er'll tell 'ee 'ow it was. It was a accidenk. She was in a 'urry, you see. Getting things ready for the pearty. It was quite a accidenk.

MR. P.: 'Ow could it be quite a accidenk?

MRS. P.: 'Er 'ands were wet, you see; she's particular about 'er 'ands——

MR. P.: Clumsy 'anded——

MRS. P.: They was all soapy from washing. It was quite a accidenk.

MR. P.: And so she let it slip.

MRS. P.: She didn't see where she was going. The sun was in 'er eyes or somethink. She's goin' to tell yer 'ow it was.

MR. P.: My wold Toby jug as Granfer 'ad. 'Er could a broak my 'eart sooner. 'Er could. 'Er could. [*He pushes away his bread and cheese.*] I can't eat my vittles after that. That I can't. Careless girt gowk!

[*Enter* NAN—OLD PARGETTER *stares at her hard all through this scene.*]

NAN: You be back early, Uncle.

MRS. P.: Well?

NAN: Yes, Aunt.

MRS. P: "Yes, Aunt." 'Ave you looked at yourself long enough in the glass?

NAN: What glass?

MRS. P.: The glass upstairs.

NAN: The beds are made. I suppose that's what you mean.

MRS. P.: That's not the way to talk before your uncle.

NAN: May I help you cut them apples, Aunt?

MRS. P.: No, you mayn't 'elp me cut these apples. You get your own work.

NAN: I've done all my work, Aunt.

MRS. P.: None of your impudence. [*Very sharply.*]

NAN: I have.

MRS. P.: If you 'ave, it's not done properly I know. I've a good mind to make you do it over. A very good mind.

NAN: Is that the dough for the pasty?

MRS. P.: None 'o yer business.

[NAN *picks up a rolling pin*]

Put down that pin when you're told.

NAN: I wish you'd let me 'elp, Aunt? Comp'ny be coming at dark.

MRS. P.: What's it to do with you? I know w'en com'pny's coming without your dinnin' it into me.

[NAN *goes softly to the dresser*]

Wot are you creepin' about on tiptoe for? One'd think you were a thief, like your father.

NAN: [*Meekly.*] I didn't want to disturve you, Aunt.

MRS. P.: Disturve me! You couldn't disturve me more if you tried.

NAN: I'm sorry, Aunt.

MRS. P.: You know that perfectly well.

NAN: I'm sorry, Aunt.

MRS. P.: 'Ere, you give me the fidgets.

NAN: 'Ave you one of your sick headaches, Aunt?

MRS. P.: You give me the sick 'edache. One would think you might 'ave 'ad a little gratitood.

NAN: When I *was* grateful you called me a 'ipocrit.

MRS. P.: Oh! *When* was you grateful, as you call it?

NAN: When I first come 'ere. I did my best, I did. I thought you'd like me if I work' 'ard, and 'elped you.

MRS. P.: Did yer think!

NAN: I used to make you tea afore you got up of a morning: I wash up the dinner things, so as you could 'ave your nap of a afternoon. I never let you do the week's washing, not once, since I come 'ere.

MRS. P.: One 'ud expect a little something. After all that's been done for you.

NAN: Done for me! What have you ever done for me?

MRS. P.: Given you a 'ome.

NAN: A home?

MRS. P.: There's not many would 'ave took in a girl 'er dad being 'ung. But I says to your Uncle——

NAN: I know what you said to Uncle. That the Rector 'ad asked you to take me in. That's what you said to Uncle.

You was afeared the Rector'd let it be known if you refused. You was afeared folk'd get to know you for what you are. That's why you took me in. [*More softly.*] D'ye think I don't know, Aunt. I feel I do. [*Pause.*] And down in the shop they tell me what a friend you've been to me. "Mrs. Pargetter *'ave* been kind tiv ee," they say. And Mrs. Drew at the Rectory. She's another. "'Ow grateful you must feel towards your aunt." That's what she says. And you smile. You take it all in smiling. You lick your lips over all their praise. Or you play the martyr. You play the martyr. D'ye think I haven't heard you? "A lot of return I get," that's what you say. They praise you for being good to me. *Good! You!* And you make my life here a hell. You lick your lips to make life hell to me. And you tell lies about me. You mean woman. You so holy, you tell lies.

MR. P.: [*Angrily.*] Now none of that now. That's enough. You leave the room.

MRS. P.: No, she'll not leave the room. I'll learn 'er to be'ave first. [To NAN]. I'd 'ave you remember as your daily bread as you're so fond of is give you by me and your Uncle.

NAN: Given me?

MRS. P.: Per'aps you'll deny as you 'ave your food—God knows you eat enough.

NAN: And every morsel bitter. Bitter. You make it burn in my throat.

MRS. P.: And a roof over your' ed, which is more than your merits.

NAN: So 'as a man in a prison a roof.

MRS. P.: Yes. You're right. 'E 'as till 'e's 'ung. And you 'ave your clothes. The very clothes on your back. Talking of clothes, that reminds me. Take that dirty coat of yours out of

the pig-wash where you put it. I suppose you want to poison the pigs next.

NAN: [*Turning to pig wash trow.*] Oh! 'Oo've bin and done that? [*At the point of tears.*] I suppose you think it funny to spoil a poor girl's clothes. And now it's spoiled. [*She takes ribbon from pocket.*] And this is spoiled. What I'd saved up for. Now I shan't have any. You put that in the trow. You know you did.

MRS. P.: You say I put your dirty things in the trow and I'll put you in. Talk like that to me, will yer? One of these days I'll give you the cart whip, like what you deserve.

NAN: [*Turning to hide tears.*] You read your Bible, and you go to church, and you do a thing like that. You put a poor girl's coat in the trow and as good as deny it afterwards.

MR. P.: Now come, come, come. 'Ow d'yer expect to be ready for to-night? Let's 'ave no more catanddoggin' here.

MRS. P.: I'm not talking to you. 'Old yer peace. [*Furiously at interruption.*] I'm talking to *you*. [*To* NAN.] You're a black, proud, ungrateful cat. Wot your 'eart'll look like on the Day of Judgmink beats me.

NAN: Oh! [*Contemptuously—she opens out the sopping coat.*]

MRS. P.: I'll give yer "oh." 'Ere. Don't go dripping the pig-wash all about the place. You drop it. Give it to me 'ere—'ere. [*She snatches at the coat and tries to wrench it from* NAN'S *hands.*]

NAN: Don't you dare to touch it. Let go of it.

MRS. P.: Will yer. Leggo now.

NAN: I won't. No you don't. You'll tear it in another minute. I'll kill you if you tear it.

MRS. P.: Wot'll you?

NAN: I'll kill you. I'll kill you.

MRS. P.: [*Putting both hands to the coat and wrenching it free; then slashing it into* NAN'S *face.*] I'll show you 'oo's mistress 'ere, my lady. Now—see. [*She tears the collar off and stamps on it.*] There. You'll do what you're told 'ere, my lady.

[NAN *holds table and glares at her Aunt then picks up the cutting knife.*]

NAN: [*Slowly.*] My dad gave me that coat. [*A pause.*] My dad.

MRS. P.: Mind, Will, she's got the knife in 'er 'and.

MR. P.: [*Going to her.*] Give me thicky knife. [*He takes it from her.*] No temper 'ere. I've got one score against you already. Wot's come to you to-day?

MRS. P.: The devil's come to 'er. She's pretty near tore my arm off.

NAN: [*Slowly.*] You be careful.

MRS. P.: But I'll teach yer.

NAN: You be careful.

MR. P.: Nan, you go to your room.

[NAN *sullenly picks up the torn coat and then bursts into tears*]

NAN: My dad give me this coat. It's a dear coat. [*She smooths out the torn and crumpled stuff.*] And now it's all torn. [*The* PARGETTERS *watch her with a sort of hard scorn.*] I'll never be able to wear en again. Oh, my dad, I wish I was dead. I wish I was dead.

MR. P.: No sinful talk like that, now. I won't 'ave it.

NAN: Uncle! I 'ave tried, I 'ave, Uncle.

MR. P.: Don't turn to me, girl. You'd ought to turn to God—giving way to the devil—No—and you've not been straight. If you'd told me at once I'd 'ave let it pass. Though I felt it. [*A pause, then testily.*] Come now, be straight. That's above all things. [*A pause,* NAN *sobs.*] Eh? [NAN *sobs.*]

MR. P.: [*Rising.*] 'Aven't you something to tell me?

NAN: No! No!

MR. P.: [*Grimly.*] I thought you 'ad. [*Turning.*]

NAN: Oh, Uncle! Do 'ee.

MR. P.: [*Going.*] I didn't think it of you.

NAN: Uncle.

MR. P.: I didn't think it.

[*Exit*]

MRS. P.: [*Going up to her.*] I'll make your belly bitter, like in the Bible.

NAN: You! Oh! [*Turns from her.*] Oh, Dad, I wish I were with 'ee, I do.

MRS. P.: [*Bitterly.*] You'll spoil yer looks for to-night, I shouldn't wonder. You won't 'ave yer young men neighing after yer. Dirty 'ogs.

[NAN *picks up apples and begins to cut them, still crying*]

MRS. P.: I'll watch you with your young men! I'm not going to 'ave no mothers coming round complaining.

NAN: [*Slowly.*] I 'ope you may never feel wot I feel.

[*Enter* JENNY]

JENNY: Mawther!

MRS. P.: 'Ush!

JENNY: There be Dick's trap with the groceries.

MRS. P.: Time too. 'Ere [*to* NAN] go and get them!

NAN: Me?

MRS. P.: Yes, you. 'Oo else. Do something for your living for once in a way.

[*Exit* NAN]

JENNY: Mother, wot 'ave Dad say?

MRS. P.: 'Ush yer tongue. I've made *that* right.

JENNY: O mother. I thort 'e'd 'ave my 'ed off for it.

MRS. P.: Never you 'eed of that. I've somethink else to say to you. That girl, Nan——

JENNY: Wot, Mother?

MRS. P.: [*Speaking very rapidly.*] You better watch out she don't tread a thy corns, as well as thy mother's she've a done.

JENNY: Wot do 'ee mean, Mother?

MRS. P.: Dick Gurvil's 'oo I mean.

JENNY: Oh!

MRS. P.: Yes, Dick Gurvil! She've set 'er cap at Dick.

JENNY: Oh!

MRS. P.: [*Mimicking.*] Oh! Oh! *Yes*, and Dick be sweet on 'er.

JENNY: I don't care, Mother.

MRS. P.: Yes, you do care. 'Ave done o' your folly.

JENNY: Dick can please 'isself so far as I'm concerned, I'm sure.

MRS. P.: No 'e can't please 'isself, as you call it. 'Oo else'd yer get if you lose 'im? You take a man when you can get 'im. There ain't too many, let me tell yer.

JENNY: I do-an't care, I'm sure. I don't want no men.

MRS. P.: Don't you want. You listen to me. You got ter want. Whether you like or not. I ain't goin' to 'ave you the talk of the town.

JENNY: Lor, Mother! I didn't think of that.

MRS. P.: No, I know you didn't think.

JENNY: Lor, Mother.

MRS. P.: 'Oo 'ad 'er man took by a gallus-bird.

JENNY: Would they say that, Mother?

MRS. P.: 'Oo's she to take Dick Gurvil? If you'd any pride——

JENNY: Be you sure she be a-trying for Dick?

MRS. P.: Well, you best find out.

JENNY: I'll watch it, I will.

MRS. P.: [*As* NAN *enters.*] Ah! you'd a better! Now I got to see to the 'ousework. I'll expect you to 'ave everythink ready against I come back. [*To* NAN.] You may think as you're someone. I'll learn you different. None o' your tricks, 'ere. No! Nor none of your mother's carryings on (*a pause*) with men. That's wot I mean. . . . Gallus bird.

[*She goes out,* NAN *draws a chair to the table—*JENNY *is already seated—and begins to cut apples. She is crying. She gathers the torn coat together tenderly.*]

JENNY: Never mind Mother, Nan. She don't mean nothin'!

NAN: I don't——

JENNY: She be only put out by 'avin' comp'ny to-night.

NAN: It's not! It's not! Oh, she'd ought to leave my father.

JENNY: There, there now—let I get 'ee some warm warter off the 'ob. Your eyes'll be as red as red.

NAN: I don't care, I don't care.

JENNY: Why, come now. Us be going to be girt friends, us be, ben't us? Mother be a 'ard woman to please. But 'er don't mean it.

NAN: Her do speak so bitter. They be all against me! The 'ole world be against me.

JENNY: [*With bowl of water and a handkerchief.*] Do 'ee jest mop thy eyes. Or let I.

NAN: It be kind of you to trouble. What a girt silly I be to cry so!

JENNY: Your eyes'll be as red. Come, come! There be 'andsome young men a-comin'. I wouldn't wonder as they be all sweet on you! I wouldn't wonder as you'd 'ave a sweet'eart some Easter.

NAN: A sweet'eart! A charity girl!

JENNY: Don't take it to 'eart. Us be goin' to be friends, ben't us, dear?

NAN: It be kind of you to speak kind.

JENNY: And us'll go out of a Sunday. Why, us'll be girt friends. It go to my 'eart to think of thy trouble.

NAN: Will 'ee be a friend, cousin Jenny?

JENNY: There, there. Wot pretty eyes you 'ave. Your

'air's thicker than mine. 'Ow you do a set it off. Us'll 'ave no secrets, will us?

NAN: 'Ee will be my friend, won't 'ee, Jenny? Do-an't 'ee be agen me—I couldn't bear it if you turned against me. I've sometimes been near killing myself since I came here. Your Mother's been that bitter to me.

JENNY: Don't 'ee say such things.

NAN: Jenny, I'll tell 'ee why I didn't kill myself.

JENNY: Lord, Nan, doa-n't 'ee.

NAN: I want 'ee to bear with me, Jenny. I'll tell 'ee why I didn't kill myself. I thought . . . there . . . it's only nonsense. Did you ever think about men, Jenny? About loving a man? About marriage?

JENNY: I've 'oped to 'ave a 'ome of my own. And not to be a burden 'ere and that.

NAN: Ah! But about 'elping a man?

JENNY: A man 'as strength. 'E ought to 'elp a woman.

NAN: I could 'elp a man, Jenny.

JENNY: Wot ideyers you do 'ave!

NAN: When a girl's 'eart is breaking, Jenny, she 'as ideyers.

JENNY: Ah!

NAN: Jenny!

JENNY: Yes, Nan?

NAN: I've never talked to a woman like this afore. I felt I'd die if I couldn't talk to someone.

JENNY: I know, exackly!

NAN: When I see you so kind, and you so pretty, Jenny, I felt I must speak.

JENNY: Do you think me pretty, Nan?

NAN: Yes, Jenny.

JENNY: In service they thought me pretty. All but cook.

NAN: You are pretty, Jenny.

JENNY: Cook was a unpleasant old thing. She did 'er 'air in papers. No ladies do their 'air in papers! Ow! she was 'orrid of a morning. O! the waste I see go on in that 'ouse. They 'ad pastry every day. And the ladies had milk and biscuits at eleven of a morning.

NAN: You must tell me all your secrets, Jenny.

JENNY: That I will. And will 'ee tell I all yourn?

NAN: If you like, Jenny.

JENNY: And will 'ee tell I when you 'ave a sweet'eart?

NAN: Ah! A sweet'eart. You must tell me about yours, Jenny.

JENNY: Ah! I ain't got one yet.

NAN: 'Aven't you, Jenny?

JENNY: Noa. Not one special like.

NAN: You'll 'ave one soon, Jenny. O Jenny, I hope you'll be very 'appy.

JENNY: Love be queer, ben't it? The things it makes people do. Could 'ee fancy a man, Nan?

NAN: Perhaps.

JENNY: Ugly girt scrawfs, I think they be.

NAN: Not all of them.

JENNY: Perhaps you 'ave a fancy, Nan? 'Ave you, dear. 'Ave you? 'Oo be it, Nan? Tell me, dearie. I wouldn't tell a single soul. Tell me, Nan. You said as you'd 'ave no secrets from me.

NAN: Ah!

JENNY: Is it anyone I know?

[NAN *goes to her and puts an arm round her and kisses her*]

NAN: Yes, dear.

JENNY: Be it Artie Pearce?

NAN: No, Jenny.

JENNY: 'Oo be it. It be a shame not to tell me!

NAN: Jenny dear?

JENNY: Yes, Nan. Tell me now. Whisper.

NAN: It be Dick Gurvil, Jenny.

JENNY: Dick Gurvil?

NAN: I love him. I love him.

JENNY: Do you love him very much?

NAN: It feel like my 'eart was in flower, Jenny.

JENNY: Ah! It must. [*A pause*] I 'ope you'll be very 'appy. You and Mr. Gurvil.

NAN: God bless you, Jenny.

JENNY: What eyes you have got, cousin Nan. To think of you fancying Dick! It *be* nice to 'ave you for a friend, cousin Nan.

NAN: Kiss me, dear. You've never kissed me.

JENNY: There! Go and bathe thy eyes, Nan. They'll be red if 'ee don't. 'Ee mustn't 'ave them red for Dick to-night. Bathe 'em in cold.

NAN: I could cry, I could. [*She goes slowly out.*]

JENNY: [*At the other door.*] Mother. [*A pause.*] [*Softly.*] Mother.

MRS. P.: [*Off.*] Yes!

JENNY: Come 'ere a moment.

MRS. P.: [*Wiping her hands.*] What d'yer want now?

JENNY: About Nan.

MRS. P.: Wot? Wot about 'er?

JENNY: [*Giggling.*] She be soft on Dick, Mother. Her've a-told me.

MRS. P.: Ho!

JENNY: [*Giggling.*] Us'll 'ave to watch it, Mother.

MRS. P.: I'll watch it.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *The kitchen.* NAN *tidying up. She places tray, glasses and bottle in inner room.*

NAN: [*Sings.*] . . . .

Blow, blow, thou winds of winter blow,
And cover me with sparklen snow,
And tear the branches from the tree,
And strew the dead leaves over me.

DICK: [*Coming in.*] Miss Nan.

NAN: Why, Mr. Gurvil! What a start you give me. You be early.

DICK: Ah? When'll the others be 'ere?

NAN: Not yet. It's not half past yet.

DICK: When'll the others—Mrs. Pargetter—be down?

NAN: They won't be down this ten minutes. They be dressing.

DICK: And 'aven't the fiddler come?

NAN: No.

DICK: Per'aps I'd a better go out again.

NAN: No. Come in and sit down, Mr. Dick. They'll be 'ere direckly. I'll be done. Tell me the news in the great world. What be 'appening?

DICK: They do say there be a criminal a-broak loose. Out of Glorster jail.

NAN: Indeed!

DICK: And come 'idin' 'ere somewhere, they think.

NAN: What makes them think that?

DICK: I dunno. But there be a Bow Street Runner. And there be a gentleman come. They were askin' where Parson live. They must be 'avin' a hue and cry. Hope they'll catch 'im and 'ang 'im. I'd like to sick the dogs at 'em.

NAN: They be 'uman beings, like us be, Mr. Dick.

DICK: [*Undoing his neck-cloth.*] No, they ben't like us. That be where you women go wrong. Along of your 'earts, that is. I'd like to see all criminals 'anged. Then us honest ones might fare to prosper. [*He takes off neck-cloth.*]

NAN: What'll you take, Mr. Dick, after your walk?

DICK: What be going?

NAN: 'Ave some zider and a cake. They be in the next room, ready.

DICK: If it ben't troubling you, I ull.

[NAN *fetches mug and plate*]

DICK: [*Taking a cake.*] I'd ought to be a-waiting on you, not you a-waiting on me. Only I 'avent any angel-cakes 'ere. None but angel-cakes 'd be fit eating for you, Miss Nan.

NAN: Oh, now, I wonder how many girls you've made that speech to.

DICK: None, I never.

NAN: Well, I hope you like your cake?

DICK: It be beautiful. A spice-cake, when it be split and buttered, and just set to the fire, so as the butter runs. I don't mean to toast it; but just set to the fire, and then just a sprinkle of sugar to give it a taste. Not so as to make it sweet, you know. It go down like roses. Like kissing a zweet'eart at 'arvest time. When the girt moon be zhining.

NAN: If they be all that to you, Mr. Dick, you must 'ave another. Try and think the clock be the moon a-zhining.

[*She gets more cakes*]

DICK: It be lovely 'aving cakes and you bringing them to me. [*Bites.*] But there ben't no sugar, not on this one. Miss Nan, will 'ee jest put thy pretty 'and on this cake, and then it'll be sugared lovely.

NAN: I'm not going to do anything so silly. 'Ere. Take this one. This one be sugared.

DICK: [*Eating.*] It 'ud be just 'eaven if you'd 'ave 'alf of it. So's I might feel—some'ow—as——

NAN: No. I won't 'ave any. 'Ave another drop of zider.

DICK: [*Tasting.*] Your zider be too peert, Miss Nan. I like zider to be peert, like I likes my black puddens done, up to a point. But zider's peert's this—I tell you what it want. It want to 'ave a apple roast therein, and a sod toast therein, and then it want to 'ave a nutmeg grated ever so light, not rough, yer know. And then it be made mellow, like, like tart of a Sunday.

NAN: Why, Mr. Dick, you'd ought to have been a cook, I think.

DICK: My father say to me—"Mind thy innards," he say. I 'ad to do for my father, arter mother died. Very pertiklar about his innards dad were. I learned about innards from 'im.

NAN: It be wonderful to 'ave a father to do for. To think as he knowed 'ee when you were a little un. To think as perhaps 'e give up lots o' things, so's you might fare to be great in the world.

DICK: My dad never give up. 'E said 'e try it once, just to try like. It never'd 'ave suit my dad.

NAN: It be always 'ard for a man to give up, even for a child, they say. But a woman 'as to give up. You don't know. You never think per'aps what a woman gives up. She gives up 'er beauty and 'er peace. She gives up 'er share of joy in the world. All to bear a little one; as per'aps'll not give 'er bread when 'er be wold.

DICK: I wonder women ever want to 'ave children. They be so beautiful avore they 'ave children. They 'ave their red cheeks, so soft. And sweet lips so red's red. And their eyes bright, like stars a-zhining. And oh, such white soft 'ands.

Touch one of 'em, and you 'ave like shoots all down. Beauti-vul. Love-lee.

NAN: It be a proud thing to 'ave a beauty to raise love in a man.

DICK: And after. I seen the same girls, with their 'ands all rough of washing-day, and their fingers all scarred of stitching. And their cheeks all flaggin', and sunk. And dull as toads' bellies, the colour of 'em. And their eyes be 'eavy, like a foundered wold ewe's when 'er time be on 'er. And lips all bit. And there they do go with the backache on 'em. Pitiful, I call it. Draggin' their wold raggy skirts. And the baby crying. And little Dick with 'is nose all bloody, fallen in the grate. And little Sairey fell in the yard, and 'ad 'er 'air mucked. Ah! Ugh! It go to my 'eart.

NAN: Ah, but that ben't the all of love, Mr. Dick. It be 'ard to see beauty gone, and joy gone, and a light 'eart broke. But it be wonderful for to 'ave little ones. To 'ave brought life into the world. To 'ave 'ad them little live things knocking on your 'eart, all them months. And then to feed them. 'Elpless like that.

DICK: They be pretty, little ones be, when they be kept clean and that. I likes 'earing them sing 'imns. I likes watching the little boys zwimming in the river. They be so white and swift, washing themselves. And the splashin' do shine zo. Diamonds. 'Oo be coming 'ere to-night—'sides us?

NAN: Old Gaffer Pearce be a-comin' to fiddle.

DICK: He'd ought to be in mad'ouse, Gaffer did. Dotty owd gape. He ben't wholly stalwart in uns brains, folk do observe. But——

NAN: He been a beautiful fiddler.

DICK: He been a wonder, that old man 'ave.

NAN: 'E play wonderful still, when 'e gets thinking of old times, and of 'is girl as 'e calls 'er. Why, she've been dead fifty years and more.

DICK: She was beautiful. They call 'er the Star of the West. My dad 'ave tell of 'er. She 'ad a face like cream.

NAN: He made beautiful poems to 'er; and music, 'e did. I 'eard 'im sing 'is poems once. He was fiddlin' quiet-like, all the time 'e were a-singing; and the tears standing in 'is eyes. 'E's never been quite right since the Lord 'ad mercy on 'er.

DICK: 'Oo else's comin' 'sides Gaffer?

NAN: Tommy and Artie. What a 'andsome boy Artie be grown.

DICK: Ah? I 'ear 'em say that. I couldn't ever see it.

NAN: He be just like his mother. Black and comely.

DICK: I likes a good black. I likes a good brown, a good bay brown. I likes a good black too. There be bright blacks and there be dull blacks. Now what be the black as I likes? Your 'air is jest the very colour. Beautiful I call it.

NAN: [*Getting up.*] If you ben't going to 'ave more zider I'll take your mug, Mr. Dick. Mr. Dick.

DICK: Yes.

NAN: We've 'ad a sheep die on us last week. Don't you 'ave none of our 'ot mutton pies to-night.

DICK: Ah? I 'ope you'll give me twice of trotters, instead like, I can do with a trotter, I can. I s'pose us be going to 'ave great times 'ere to-night, Miss Nan.

NAN: Yes, indeed. Us'll dance the moon down to-night.

DICK: I s'pose you be a girt lady to dance?

NAN: I've not dance now, for more'n a year, Mr. Dick.

DICK: I s'pose you 'ad dancings when you were to 'ome.

NAN: Us used to dance on our doorsteps at 'ome. There was an old man used to fiddle to us. Every night there was a moon, we danced. The girls would dance in their pattens. They used to go clack, clack, their feet did. You'd a thought it was drums, Mr. Dick.

DICK: I wish I'd bin there to 'ave dance with you.

NAN: And then we used to sing "Joan to the Maypole" and "Randal" and all the old songs. And there'd be beetles a buzzin'. And sometimes one of the shepherds come with 'is flute. It was nice at 'ome, then.

DICK: What times us be 'avin' since you come 'ere. It be always sad to leave 'ome. But I spose you'll be going back afore long. Your dad and your mother'll be a-wanting you. Sure to be.

NAN: They be dead, Mr. Dick.

DICK: Now, be they indeed! Mrs. Pargetter do talk's though you 'ad both your folk.

NAN: Mrs. Pargetter! She has 'er reasons, Mr. Dick, for letting folk think that.

DICK: What reasons can 'er 'ave for that, Miss Nan?

NAN: Some day, per'aps I'll tell you 'er reasons. Now let I take your coat and hat.

[*She takes coat, hat, etc., and puts them in inner room. Then Re-enters.*]

DICK: 'Ow brave you be a-looking, Miss Nan.

NAN: Soap and water tells, they do say.

DICK: You be all roses, Miss Nan. And you be all lilies.

NAN: Why, Mr. Dick! You be quite the courtier.

DICK: Ah! [*Producing a rose.*] Miss Nan?

NAN: Yes?

DICK: I brought a rose——

NAN: For Jenny, Mr. Dick?

DICK: No, for 'ee. Will 'ee wear it, Miss Nan?

NAN: Yes, if you'll give it to me.

DICK: 'Ere it be. Will 'ee say thank you for it?

NAN: Thank you, Mr. Dick. What a beautiful rose!

DICK: 'Er be a Campden Wonder. 'Er be red. Like love. Love be red. Like roses.

NAN: Oh!

DICK: I see that rose growing, Miss Nan—an' I—I thought 'er'd look beautiful if—if—if you were wearing of 'er, like.

NAN: Well, I hope it does.

DICK: You put 'er to the blush, Miss Nan—Miss Nan——

NAN: Yes?

DICK: Will you do I a favour?

NAN: What is it?

DICK: Will 'ee wear that rose in your hair?

NAN: In my hair, Mr. Dick! Why?

DICK: I 'ad a dream once of you with roses in your hair.

NAN: [*Putting rose in her hair.*] In the old times women always put roses in their hair. When they danced, they wore roses in their hair. The rose-leaves fell all about 'en, my mother told me.

DICK: It looks like it were growing out of your 'ed.

NAN: I must light the lamp.

DICK: No, don't 'ee. Don't 'ee.

NAN: [*Striking a match.*] They must have looked beautiful, those women must, in the old time. There was songs made of them. Beauty be a girt gift, Mr. Dick.

DICK: It be wonderful in a woman.

NAN: It makes a woman like God, Mr. Dick.

DICK: You be beautiful, Nan; you be beautiful.

NAN: Ah, Mr. Dick.

DICK: You be beautiful. You be like a fairy. The rose. You be beautiful like in my dream.

NAN: Ah! Let go my hands. Let go my hands.

DICK: You be beautiful. Your eyes. And your face so pale. And your hair with the rose. O Nan, you be lovely. You be lovely!

NAN: O don't! Don't!

DICK: My love, my beloved.

NAN: Ah!

DICK: I love you, O Nan, I love you.

NAN: Let me go; let me go, please.

DICK: Do 'ee care for me? Do 'ee love me, Nan?

NAN: You don't know! You don't know! You don't know about me.

DICK: I love you.

NAN: Ah! You mustn't. You mustn't love me.

DICK: There be no high queen 'as a beauty like yours, Nan.

NAN: O! let me go.

DICK: My love! My 'andsome!

NAN: O! Dick.

DICK: Nan, O Nan, do 'ee love me?

NAN: Ah!

DICK: Dear sweet. Will 'ee marry me? Do 'ee love me?

NAN: I love you, Dick.

DICK: My love! My pretty!

NAN: My dear love.

DICK: My beautiful. I'll make a song for you, my beautiful.

NAN: Your loving me, that's song enough.

DICK: Nan, dear, let I take the pins out of your hair. Let me 'ave your 'air all loose. Your lovely hair. O Nan, you be a beautiful woman.

NAN: Ah, God! I wish I were beautiful.

DICK: Dear love, you be.

NAN: More beautiful. Then I'd 'ave more to give you.

DICK: Kiss me. Kiss me!

NAN: There be my 'air, Dick. It ben't much, after all.

DICK: [*Kissing the hair.*] Oh, beautiful. Beau-ti-vul. My own Nan.

NAN: I am yours, my beloved.

DICK: When shall us be married? When shall us come together?

NAN: Ah, my love! Now is enough. Now is enough.

DICK: When shall us marry?

NAN: Kiss me.

DICK: Shall it be Michaelmas?

NAN: Kiss me. Kiss me.

DICK: My winsome. My beauty.

NAN: Now loose me, darling. [*They break.*] I have had my moment. I have been happy.

DICK: Nan! Nan!

NAN: I cannot marry you. O Dick, 'ee must go away. Go away. [*He goes toward her.*] Don't 'ee. Us can never marry. You'd 'ate me if you knew. I can't tell you. Not to-night, dear. They'll be coming down directly. If I married you, Dick? Oh, I can't. I can't—if I married you—if we lived 'ere—I might bring shame upon you. They'd call names after me. They'd know. They'd know.

DICK: My pretty! My Nan. Tell thy Dick.

NAN: Ah, no, no. Don't touch me. You don't know yet. I'm—not a fit—I'm not a fit woman for you to marry, Dick. My father. My poor dad—[*she breaks down*] O Dick! O Dick! You don't know what sorrows I gone through. I think my 'eart'll break.

DICK: There, there, Nan. Tell thy Dick. My poor dearie. You be my dear love now, Nan.

NAN: If you love me, Dick—O, my love! Us together! Us needn't fear what they say. Us could go away, Dick. To America. Us'd be 'appy there. O Dick, take me out of this. All we 'ave is our lives, Dick. With love, us'd never want. Us'd 'ave that, my love. Take me, Dick.

DICK: I'll take you, darling. To-night. To-night I'll tell them.

NAN: In spite of—even if—what I 'ave to say?

DICK: No matter what it is, dear. To-night, now. To-night. When the fiddler comes.

NAN: Ah! my beloved!

DICK: I'll claim you. Before them all, I'll claim you.

NAN: Your wife, my blessed.

DICK: Kiss me, once more, dear.

NAN: Before they come.

[*Outside the door there is a shuffling and giggling*]

A VOICE: They be in. I hear 'em.

A VOICE: They ben't.

A VOICE: Don't, Artie. [*Together, rapidly.*]

A VOICE: Sh!

A VOICE: All together.

A VOICE: One after the other.

DICK: Here they are.

NAN: My beloved! My own.

VOICES: "Joan, to the maypole away let us on
The time is short and will be gone—"

[*They stop and giggle*]

ANOTHER: They ben't.

[*One hums the tune*]

DICK: To-night. Before them all. When the fiddle begins. My wife.

NAN: My husband.

VOICES: "Where your beauties may be seen." Bang! Bang! Bang! [*They knock the door. The* LOVERS *break.* MRS. PARGETTER *and* JENNY *run downstairs as* NAN *flings the door open. Enter old* GAFFER PEARCE, ARTIE *of that ilk*, TOMMY ARKER, *and* TWO GIRLS.]

MRS. P.: 'Ere you be. 'Ow nice it is to see you.

[*She kisses the girls and looks hard at Nan*]

JENNY: [*To* DICK.] Ah, Mr. Gurvil. 'Ave you brought I the rose as you promised?

DICK: You don't want no roses.

JENNY: You ain't very polite, Mr. Dick.

DICK: You got roses in your cheeks, you 'ave.

MRS. P.: 'Ow be you, gaffer?

[*General salutation*]

ARTIE: Granfer doan't 'ear you, unless you 'it 'im. [*Shouts in his ear.*] 'Ow be you, granfer?

GAFFER: [*Looking at Nan.*] Twice I seen her, twice. Her've gone by on the road. With a rose in 'er 'air. And 'er eyes shone. Twice. In April.

ARTIE: 'Ere, gaffer! Sit down 'ere. 'E can fiddle still, th'owd granfer do; but 'e doan't talk, not to strangers.

A GIRL: Us seed some strangers in the village, Mrs. Pargetter.

MRS. P.: Ah?

TOM: They were askin' where your 'ouse was. Them and parson.

ARTIE: 'Ave you been a-robbin', Mrs. Pargetter?

MRS. P.: A-robbin'! No. I 'ave enough of thieves without me going stealin', I 'ope.

ARTIE: Well. One of 'em be a runner, 'e be.

DICK: Yes, for I seed 'en too.

MRS. P.: O! So you didn't come with th' others, then, Dick?

DICK: Noa. But I seen 'en.

ALL: I wonder whatever they do want!

MRS. P.: Well. If they're coming 'ere, us shall soon know. I should a-thought the pleece could a-caught their own thieves.

[*Old* PARGETTER *comes downstairs, buttoning his waistcoat*]

MR. P.: Aha! Aha!

ALL: 'Ow be you, Mr. Pargetter?

MR. P.: [*Saluting.*] Why, 'ow beautiful all you girls be looking! 'Ullo, Dick! You be quite the bridegroom. Why, gaffer, what a old Pocahontas you be, to be sure! 'Ave you brought your fiddle?

GAFFER: [*Still staring at* NAN.] 'Oo be her? On the roads, shining, I've seen 'er. Scattering blossoms, blossoms.

JENNY: [*After glancing at* GAFFER.] So you come 'ere early, Dick. Why Nan, do look. You 'aven't a-done your 'air. Look, mother, at Nan's 'air!

MRS. P.: What in the name of Fate d'you 'ave that rose in your 'air for? And why d'yer come down with your 'air like that?

NAN: I had to open the door. I had to light the candle.

GAFFER: Give I a cup of red wine and a cup of white wine, and honey [*coming towards her*] and a apple and a—I be goin' to fiddle joy to the feet of the bride.

ARTIE: You be going to do wonders, you be. Sit down, you old stupe. Ain't no bride 'ere.

MR. P.: [*To the* GIRLS.] There be brides for us all. With all you lovely young things. Nothing like 'aving a sweet'eart. Now! You ladies, you'll want to take off your things.

ARTIE: 'Ow about us?

MR. P.: One sect at a time. Like the sheep goin' through a 'edge. Per'aps you ladies'll go up-stairs with Nan and Jenny 'ere.

NAN: Come, Ellen.

JENNY: 'Ere! Give I your brolly.

[*The* GIRLS *go upstairs*]

MR. P.: Now, you gentlemen. Come on in 'ere with me. [*He leads them to the inner room.*]

MRS. P.: [*As* DICK *follows.*] Oh, Dick.

DICK: Ess, Mrs. Pargetter.

MRS. P.: I see you 'ave your things off. Just 'elp me a moment, there's a good lad.

DICK: Ess, Mrs. Pargetter. What do 'e want done?

MRS. P.: Us must 'ave all clear for dancing. I'll nip them candles over 'ere to the dresser. There. Now 'elp me lift the table over. There! You was 'ere early, wasn't yer, Dick?

DICK: Nothin' to speak of. 'Ow about them chairs?

MRS. P.: They'll do nicely. I suppose Nan let you in?

DICK: Ess. Miss Nan done.

MRS. P.: You two been 'aving a fine game, I know.

DICK: Ah?

MRS. P.: Don't tell me you 'aven't. Did she kiss yer?

DICK: [*Sullenly.*] Never you mind.

MRS. P.: Oh, I don't mind. But I got eyes, I 'ave.

DICK: Oh! What good 'ave they done yer?

MRS. P.: O, when I see a girl with 'er face all flushed, and 'er 'air all 'anging down, and a rose stuck over 'er ear, and a young man by 'er as flustered as what you are—Well—I can—

DICK: What can you?

MRS. P.: Well, I know they don't come like that of their own.

DICK: [*Sullenly.*] Do you?

MRS. P.: I ain't blaming yer, mind.

DICK: Aren't yer?

MRS. P.: I know what it is to be young, myself. But all the same—

DICK: What?

MRS. P.: Oh, nothing.

DICK: What were you going to say?

MRS. P.: Nothing.

DICK: You were going to say something.

MRS. P.: No, I weren't. Only it mid seem strange. You see, your dad's so partikler.

DICK: Oh! 'im.

MRS. P.: 'As 'e took you in 'is partner yet? Your dad?

DICK: No.

MRS. P.: No, I know 'e 'aven't. I could tell yer something. A little surprise—about your dad.

DICK: What's that?

MRS. P.: Somethin' 'e said to me. I don't know as I've a right to tell yer.

DICK: About my being took in as partner to 'im?

MRS. P.: It was meant as a secret. But there—since—us can 'ave no secrets, can us?

DICK: Why, no—I'm——

MRS. P.: Well—your dad says to me, "Mrs. Pargetter" 'e says, "I'm gettin' to be a old man, I want to see my boy settled. Now then," 'e says. "The day my boy marries I 'ave 'im bound my partner. And £20 to 'elp 'im furnish."

DICK: Good iron! A old chanti-cleer. Balm in Gilead, as the saying is.

MRS. P.: "Yes," I says, "And more no mother could ask." [*Change of voice.*] That girl'd forsake 'er 'eavenly crown for you, Dick. She's drooped like a lily of the vale since she's been away. If you'd seen that girl as I seen 'er, you'd 'ave yourself arst this Sunday. Or you'll 'ave 'er goin' into a decline. 'Ave you arst 'er yet?

DICK: Yes. I arst 'er just now. Just this minute ago.

MRS. P.: When she was at the door 'ere?

DICK: When I come in.

MRS. P.: Wot did she say, I wonder? No tellin', I suppose?

DICK: I thought as you'd seen. I mean, from what you said.

MRS. P.: No. I never seed.

DICK: From 'er 'avin' 'er 'air down. The rose and that.

MRS. P.: 'Air down? She 'adn't 'er 'air down. I done it myself.

DICK: Yes, she 'ad 'er 'air down. You said—just now——

MRS. P.: Jenny 'ad?

DICK No, Nan.

MRS. P.: Nan: wot's she got to do with it?

DICK: I've just arst er to marry me, Mrs. Pargetter. And her 'ave said yes. [*A pause.*] It'll be nice bein' a partner and that, won't it. I'll be able to 'ave the trap of a evenin'. And I'll 'ave money for——

MRS. P.: [*Grimly.*] *You* be 'is partner! You'll be your dad's partner if you marry Jenny—that's your dad's arrangement. That's wot 'e's planned.

DICK: My dad 'ave planned——

MRS. P.: "'E shall marry as I choose," 'e says, "my son shall. If 'e don't know which side 'is bread is buttered, there's the door. 'E can beg."

DICK: 'E can beg!

MRS. P.: "Not a penny will 'e ever 'ave from *me*," 'e says. Now.

DICK: So!

[MRS. PARGETTER *watches him*]

MRS. P.: D'you think we'd let you throw Jenny over, after getting 'er talked about?

DICK: It be different 'avin' a kiss or two of a girl and wantin' to marry 'er.

[*Re-enter* PARGETTER *slowly, looking hard at* DICK *who is very white. He walks to the dresser, picks up a corkscrew, and walks slowly out, looking hard at* DICK *but saying nothing.*]

MRS. P.: Now then.

DICK: [*Moistening his lips.*] Per'aps my father'll 'ear me explain.

MRS. P.: Wot'll you tell 'im?

DICK: Tell 'im as Jenny ain't no more to me 'n what a pig's milt is. Tell 'im as I love Nan. And as I be goin' to marry 'er.

MRS. P.: [*Slowly and grimly.*] You'll tell 'im for instans, you'll tell your father, for instans, as you're goin' to marry a girl whose dad was 'ung at Glorster, like the thief 'e was. Just afore last Christmas.

DICK: Nan's dad wos?

MRS. P.: [*Nods her head.*] And 'er mother 'ad men come to see 'er. [*A pause.*] 'Ow'll yer tell that to yer dad?

DICK: My Lord Almighty! Daughter of one of them!

MRS. P.: Two of them.

DICK: My 'oly Saviour!

MRS. P.: Your 'art out of your bosom like a engine it does go.

DICK: I'll marry 'er yet to spite yer.

MRS. P.: Wot'll yer marry 'er on? You ain't got a penny. She ain't got a penny. [*A pause.*] I wonder she never told yer about 'er dad's being 'ung. They 'ad yeomanry in front of the gaol. Quite an affair. Didn't she never tell yer?

DICK: No. 'Er was going to. My! Oh my——

MRS. P.: Per'aps she waited till she 'ooked yer. 'Ark at 'em in there! [*Laughter inside and one crows like a cock.*] She is artful. I never see a deeper girl than wot she is.

DICK: Oh, 'old yer tongue, you old devil! I've 'ad my gruel.

MRS. P.: Come, come. Be a man.

DICK: Mrs. Pargetter. I mean, I'm—Mrs. Pargetter——

MRS. P.: Yes? Wot?

DICK: I dunno—I dunno wot to think.

MRS. P.: Your dad'll know wot to think.

DICK: I dunno! If I 'ad a little of my own!

MRS. P.: Oh, if yer like to starve, starve. Walk. Pad yer 'oof.

DICK: Ah! A tramper! My 'eavenly King!

MRS. P.: Lots on 'em pass 'ere. Dirt on 'em. Feet comin' through their boots. You see 'em nick crusts out of the gutter. Berries of a 'edge, some on 'em. Froze stiff, some on 'em, under a rick. Lots on 'em.

DICK: Ah! Don't! I can't! [*A pause.*]

MRS. P.: Well, Dick? Wot's it to be? Is it Jenny?

DICK: O damn it, yes, it's Jenny, Jenny. Like 'avin' a cold poultice! Very well, it's Jenny then. Now I 'ope yer satisfied.

MRS. P.: [*Kissing him.*] There. *I* knew yer wouldn't act dishonourable. I knowed you better.

[*The door opens, the men come in, singing and laughing.* ARTIE PEARCE *crows like a cock. The* GIRLS *come down, hearing the noise.*] Wot a time you people 'ave been.

MR. P.: Wot 'a you been doin' all the time?

ARTIE: [*Singing.*] Making love in the evenin'
Making love in the evenin'

A drop of zider sets one up like [*wiping his mouth*].

MRS. P.: [*To* PARGETTER.] You'll 'ear later. All in good time. 'Ere Jenny, 'elp me with these chairs! I've watched it all right. Dick and you I mean. It's settled.

JENNY: [*With a chair.*] Give I that one, Mother. O Mother, wot fun us shall 'ave.

MR. P.: Now us be goin' to 'ave a dance.

A GIRL: Be you a-goin' to dance, Mr. Pargetter?

MR. P.: Course I be. Come, gaffer. Out with that fiddle o' yourn.

A GIRL: I do love a fiddle.

JENNY: A barrel hargin be good, too.

MR. P.: Now, gaffer. Now, no long faces, anybody. Us be goin' to 'ave great times, ben't us?

NAN: Wait till I set thy chair right, gaffer.

GAFFER: [*Querulously.*] On the roads, I seen you. Surely. And it was all—all a-blowing?

NAN: Sit 'ere, now. And 'ave this cushion.

ARTIE: Don't let granfer fall into the fire. 'E will, if you don't watch it.

GAFFER: [*Bowing in the old style.*] Beauty makes women be proud. There be few beauties 'as the 'umbleness to 'elp a old man. Ah, there be no pleasure for the old; but to 'muse the young. I be a old man. A old, old man!

NAN: The old be wise, gaffer. The old 'ave peace, after their walking the world.

MRS. P.: Stuff! [*A giggle.*]

GAFFER: There be no peace to 'im as sees you, goin' by in beauty, puttin' fire to 'em.

GIRLS: Us be waitin'. Us be all ready!

MR. P.: Take your——

GAFFER: [*To* NAN.] What tune will the bride 'ave? A ring of bells and the maids flinging flowers at 'er. Like me and my girl 'ad. [*Pause.*] I 'ad a flower of 'er to go to church with. [*Pause.*] They put my flower under the mould after. [*Pause.*] I 'eard the mould go knock! [*He tunes his fiddle as he speaks.*] No one remembers my white flower. [*Pause.*] That's sixty year ago.

NAN: You'll meet her again, gaffer. Per'aps she's by you now.

GAFFER: [*With a lifting voice—half rising.*] So you've a come, my 'andsome——

MRS. P.: 'Ere. [*She taps* GAFFER'S *hand.*] Play! 'Ere! Fiddle. [*To* NAN.] Don't you see you're upsettin' 'im. Move away. One'd think you'd no feelings.

MR. P.: Take your partners.

MR. P.: Now, 'ave you all got your partners?

ALL: No. Don't be so silly, Artie. Now, do be quiet. 'Ow are us to dance! [*Etc., etc.*] You come over 'ere by me.

[NAN *stands a little apart, looking at Dick, waiting on him*]

MRS. P.: Now, now, we're all 'ere. 'Ush a moment. Afore we begin there's a little bit o' noos just 'appened, as I'd like to say about.

ARTIE: 'Ear! 'Ear!

MR. P.: [*To* ARTIE.] You be quiet! [*He grins at* ARTIE *approvingly.*]

MRS. P.: As I'm sure 'll come as a great surprise. Really, it quite took my breath away! It did, really. Now, I mustn't

stop you young people dancing. But I must just tell you this little bit of noos. He, he! Why——

ARTIE: We ain't lookin'.

A GIRL: Be quiet, Artie.

MRS. P.: Jenny and Dick 'ere 'ave made a match of it. I 'ope the present company'll wish the 'appy couple joy! Dick! Jenny! Give me your 'ands. There. [*She clasps them.*] I 'ope you'll be very 'appy together. Dick, [*kissing him*] you're my son now, ain't yer?

ARTIE: Spare 'is blushes, Mother.

ALL: Why, who'd ever a-thought it! I do 'ope you'll be 'appy. 'Ow sudden! Quite took my breath away! Jenny, come 'ere, and let I kiss 'ee. I s'pose us can't kiss you, Mr. Dick? No, Mr. Dick'll be quite the married man. 'E looks it already.

NAN: Dick, Dick, oh, Dick! What, oh, Dick, you weren't playing, Dick?

DICK: Don't Dick me. Get out!

MRS. P.: Wot are yer bothering Dick for?

NAN: I thought 'e'd something—something to say to me.

DICK: You thought I was a oly scrawf, didn't yer?

NAN: I thought I was a 'appy woman, Dick. [*She looks at him and goes slowly over to a chair. As she goes.*]

MR. P.: Now, Nan. What are you waitin' for? Take your place 'ere and dance, now.

MRS. P.: Per'aps Nan is like 'er father.

JENNY: [*Sliding her feet about.*]. 'Ow's that, Mother?

MRS. P.: Per'aps she can only dance on air.

NAN: [*Going to her.*] Yes, yes, I am like my father. You coward to say that.

MR. P.: Wot are you thinking of, with company present?

MRS. P.: You leave her to me. I'll deal with her. [*To the company.*] She thought if she 'ad 'er 'air down an' 'er neck un'ooked as *she* might 'ave a go in at Dick, 'ere.

TOMMY: 'Ope us didn't come too soon, Dick.

JENNY: She believes in giving all for love, Cousin Nan do.

MRS. P.: She'll give no more in this house. Why, 'er dad was 'ung for a thief only last Christmas.

MR. P.: Now, Mother, that's—No, she deserves it. She ain't been straight.

ALL: Ah.

NAN: Yes. I'd like you all to know that. My dad was 'ung at Glorster. I'd oughtn't to a shook your 'ands without I'd told you. I tried 'ard to tell you, Dick. Dick. Dick. I give you all I had. You 'ad me. Like I never was. Not to any. O Dick, I 'ope you'll be very, very 'appy.

DICK: 'Ere. Go and say your piece to Gaffer there. 'E 'asn't many pleasures, I've done with yer. 'Ere, Jenny, you be goin' to dance with I.

JENNY: [*Giggling.*] I think I could 'elp, Dick Gurvil.

DICK: 'Elp me then. Come on.

JENNY: Law. It make my heart all of a flower. That's wot Cousin Nan says. I s'pose it must be very clever if 'er says it.

NAN: I wish—I wish the grass was over my 'ed.

DICK: 'Ere. Us wish to dance.

[*Nan goes aside*]

GAFFER: A bride's tears be zoon a-dried. But love be a zweet vlower. A girt red vlower. Her do last for ever. For ever. [*He plays "Joan to the Maypole."*] Like me and my girl, for ever!

[*They dance*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

[SCENE: *The same.* NAN *at table at back. A noise within.* GAFFER *in his chair.*]

NAN: Life be that bitter. O dad, life be that bitter.

GAFFER: You be young to 'ave life bitter on you.

NAN: It isn't time makes us old.

GAFFER: Some on us is glad to go away. Quite early.

NAN: I wish I could go away. I wish I could go away.

GAFFER: Us'll all be took away, afore long.

NAN: I'd like to be took away now.

GAFFER: I've a-wanted to be took away ever since my vlower were took. Many a long year. And I grawed to be a old, old man. I were out of work sometimes. And I be old now. Very old.

NAN: Per'aps you'll join 'er soon, gaffer.

GAFFER: Noa. Not for a girt while. I 'ave 'er little grave. I 'ave 'er little grave to see to. With vlowers and that. If I 'ad girt bags of gold like Squire, I could 'ave a 'edstone put.

I'd 'ave 'er little grave all carved. I'd 'ave posies cut. And 'er face down on the stone. All in white I'd 'ave my vlower cut. White stone. There be no kings 'd 'ave whiter. But I can't never avord a 'edstone. So I ben't goin' to die. Noa. I ben't goin' to die.

NAN: When love be dead, gaffer, what be there else?

GAFFER: There be the grave. It be all the poor 'as, just the grave. And I got my vlower's grave. Eight maids in white there was. No older than my vlower they was. And there were all white vlowers on 'er. Eight maids in white, maidy. And the bell tolling. Oh, my white blossom to go under the grass.

NAN: She was very young to be took, Gaffer.

GAFFER: They was eight maids in white when they carried 'er. Then they was women. Beautiful they were. Then they grew old. One by one. And then their 'ouses were to let, with the windows broke. And grass and grass. They be all gone. When I be gone there'll be none to tell the beauty of my vlower. There'll be none as knows where 'er body lies. I 'ave 'er little grave all done with shells. And the vlowers that do come up, they be little words from 'er. Little zhining words. Fifty-nine year them little words come.

NAN: I got a grave, too, gaffer. And I 'ave fifty-nine years to come.

GAFFER: My bright 'ansome. 'Oo 'ave you in yer grave?

NAN: I 'ave my 'eart in the grave, gaffer. But there'll be no vlowers come up out of 'er. I shall be 'ere fifty-nine year per-'aps. Like you been. Fifty-nine year. Twelve times fifty-nine is—and four times that. Three hundred and sixty-five days in a year. Up, and work, and lie down again. But dead,

dead, dead. All the time dead. No. No. Not that. Gaffer. How did thy vlower die?

GAFFER: There come a gold rider in the evening, maidy.

NAN: You was by 'er, Gaffer?

GAFFER: She looked out of the window, my white vlower done. She said, "The tide. The tide. The tide coming up the river." And a horn blew. The gold rider blew a 'orn. And she rose up, my white vlower done. And she burst out a-laughing, a-laughing. And 'er fell back, my white vlower done. Gold 'air on the pillow. And blood. Oh, blood. Blood of my girl. Blood of my vlower.

NAN: In your arms, gaffer?

GAFFER: On my 'eart. My white vlower lay on my 'eart. The tide. The tide. The tide coming up the river.

NAN: She was 'appy to die so, gaffer. Along of 'er true love. You 'ad the sweet of love along of your vlower. But them as 'as the sharp of love. Them as never 'as no sweet. O I wish the tide was comin' up over my 'ed, I do.

GAFFER: It be full moon to-night, maidy.

NAN: Full moon. It come up misty. And red.

GAFFER: It was red on the pillow. Then.

NAN: The harvest-moon.

GAFFER: There'll be a high tide to-night.

NAN: A high tide.

GAFFER: For some on us.

NAN: Why for some on us, gaffer?

GAFFER: The tide be comin' for some on us.

NAN: For you, gaffer?

GAFFER: Ther've come no message yet for me. But the tide be a-comin' for some on us. It 'ave someone every time. It 'ad my vlower one time. O it be a gallows thing, the tide. First there be the mud and that. Sand banks. Mud banks. And the 'erons fishing. Sand in the river, afore the tide comes. Mud. The cows come out o' pasture to drink. They come on the sand. Red cows. But they be afraid of the tide.

NAN: They 'aven't no grief, the beasts asn't. Cropping on the meadows when the sun do zhine.

GAFFER: They be afraid of the tide. For first there come a-wammerin' and a-wammerin'. Miles away that wammerin' be. In the sea. The shipmen do cross theirselves. And it come up. It come nearer. Wammerin', Wammerin'! 'Ush it says. 'Ush it says. 'Ush it says. And there come a girt wash of it over the rock. White. White. Like a bird. Like a swan a-gettin' up out of the pool.

NAN: Bright it goes. High. High up. Flashing.

GAFFER: And it wammers and it bubbles. And then it spreads. It goes out like soldiers. It go out into a line. It curls. It curls. It go toppling and toppling. And on it come. And on it come.

NAN: Fast. Fast. A black line. And the foam all creamin' on it.

GAFFER: It be a snake. A snake. A girt water snake with its 'ed up. Swimming. On it come.

NAN: A bright crown upon it. And hungry.

GAFFER: With a rush. With a roar. And its claws clutchin' at you. Out they go at the sides, the claws do.

NAN: The claws of the tide.

GAFFER: Singing. Singing. And the sea a-roaring after. O, it takes them. They stand out in the river. And it goes over them. Over them. Over them. One roarin' rush.

NAN: Deep. Deep. Water in their eyes. Over their hair. And to-night it be the harvest tide.

GAFFER: [*As though waking from a dream.*] The salmon-fishers 'll lose their nets to-night.

The tide'll sweep them away. O, I've known it. It takes the nets up miles. Miles. They find 'em high up. Beyond Glorster. Beyond 'Artpury. Girt golden flag-flowers over 'em. And apple-trees a-growin' over 'em. Apples of red and apples of gold. They fall into the water. The water be still there, where the apples fall. The nets 'ave apples in them.

NAN: And fish, gaffer?

GAFFER: Strange fish. Strange fish out of the sea.

NAN: Yes. Strange fish indeed, gaffer. A strange fish in the nets to-morrow. A dumb thing. Knocking agen the bridges. Something white. Something white in the water. They'd pull me out. Men would. They'd touch my body. [*Shuddering.*] I couldn't. I couldn't.

[*Loud laughter from within, and a clatter of knives. The door opens. Enter* JENNY *from inner room, carrying a dirty plate, with dirty knife and fork. As* JENNY *comes in,* MRS. PARGETTER *is heard off.*]

MRS. P.: Is *she* in there?

JENNY: Yes.

MRS. P.: Tell 'er to come in.

JENNY: [*To* NAN.] You're to go in, mother says.

MR. P.: [*Heard off.*] 'Ere, shut that door behind yer. It blows my 'ed off. [JENNY *turns and shuts the door.*]

NAN: What 'ave you got there, Jenny?

JENNY: [*Uneasily.*] You're to go in, mother says.

NAN: [*Rising.*] Never mind what mother says. Answer my question, my friend, my girt friend, my little creeping friend. What 'ave you got there?

JENNY: [*Shrinking.*] A mutton parsty pie for gaffer, as mother sent. It'll be a little treat for 'im.

NAN: [*Looking.*] Whose plate have you brought it on, my little friend?

JENNY: [*Stammering.*] Mother's plate.

NAN: It is a dirty plate. And the knives and forks are dirty.

JENNY: [*Confidently.*] Gaffer won't know any different. It's good enough for an old man like 'im. 'Ere, gaffer. 'Ere's some supper for yer.

NAN: [*Going up to her.*] No, my friend, my girt friend, my little Judas friend, my little pale snake friend. It's not good enough. Did *you* 'ave one of them pies?

JENNY: [*Blustering.*] You can—I ain't goin' to——

NAN: Did you? The sheep died. The sheep died last week. Did *you* eat one of them pies?

JENNY: No, I know what the sheep die of. Gaffer won't mind. 'Ere, gaffer.

NAN: [*Fiercely.*] Sit down, my little friend. Sit down and eat that pie yourself. Eat it. Eat it or I'll kill you. Eat it. You with no charity to old or young. You shall eat the charity of the uncharitable. Eat it. You little snake. Eat it.

JENNY: I'll—I'll send mother to you.

NAN: [*Preventing her.*] No. Oh, no. [*Forcing her into a chair.*] Eat. Eat. [JENNY *in great terror begins to eat.*]

JENNY I be goin' to be sick.

NAN: Eat. [JENNY *eats. Then shrinks back.*]

JENNY: [*After a mouthful.*] Wot are you lookin' at me for?

NAN: I'm looking at my friend. My friend.

JENNY: [*After a mouthful.*] I can't eat with you watchin' me.

NAN: Yes, Jenny. It is your bride cake. Your bride cake. Your bride cake for your marriage, Jenny.

JENNY: [*Screaming.*] *Don't* look at me like that.

NAN: [*Coming up to her and glaring down into her face.*] Yes. Jenny. I must look at you like this. I must look into your soul, Jenny. Into your soul. [*Slowly and quietly.*]

JENNY: Ah-h.

NAN: You 'ave pale eyes, Jenny. Pale eyes. I can look into your soul. D'you know what I see, Jenny? [*A pause.*] I see your soul. It is cold, Jenny. It's a little mean cold, lying thing. You're a lucky one, Jenny. You cannot love nor hate. A dog loves more and hates more. A worm do. D'you know what comes to such souls, Jenny?

JENNY: [*Gasping.*] Mother! Mother!

NAN: I'll tell you, Jenny. I'll tell your future to you. I see your life very plain in your pale eyes. I see a girt town, with lamps. And I see you in a public 'ouse, Jenny, with red on your white cheeks. And your pale eyes are swollen with drink. And you've a raggy skirt. And you cough. And you tremble. That is the pay in this world, Jenny, for a little cold mean lying thing. And I see a dirty room with a dirty bed, and you lying dead on it. Your painted cheeks on the pillow. Till the town dead-cart come. Out with you. Out with you. Out with you. [JENNY *totters, gasping, to the door.*]

JENNY: Ah. Ah-h! [*She leans up against the door, holding it by the latch, in terror; she is only half conscious.*]

GAFFER: [*Rousing and shading his eyes looking up.*] Be you ready for your journey, maidy?

NAN: My journey.

GAFFER: You must eat and drink, my 'andsome. 'E be coming.

NAN: Who be coming?

GAFFER: The gold rider, maidy. 'E be comin' on the road.

NAN: The gold rider. We will eat and drink, gaffer. It be a long road to go. [*She opens oven and brings out the apple-pasty; then takes a carving knife, and plate. Then the brandy bottle. She cuts the pasty and gives food to* GAFFER.]

GAFFER: [*Rising unsteadily and holding up his hands.*] Bless this food to thy service. Bless the Giver of all good things. Amen. [*He eats.*]

NAN: Amen. [*The outer door is knocked. Footsteps outside.*] Drink, gaffer. [*She gives him a sup of brandy.*]

GAFFER: [*Drinking to her.*] A fair journey. Vlowers on the road afore you. O gold 'oofs. Gold 'oofs. Be swift. Swift. [*A knocking at outer door.*]

A VOICE: Is anyone inside there? Open.

NAN: Drink, gaffer. [*Violent knocking outside. The inner door is shaken by those within.* JENNY *holds the latch and keeps them from entering.*]

JENNY: O! O! Don't let 'er in on me. Don't let 'er in on me. (*Falling against the wall.*] Oh, oh.

[*Enter the* PARGETTERS *and* DICK. *The others cluster at the doorway.*]

DICK: [*Seeing* JENNY *and glad to have* NAN *for once in the wrong. Angrily.*] Wot 'ave you been doin' to 'er? Eh?

MRS. P.: [*Advancing on* NAN.] Why can't you open the door? Standing staring there.

MR. P.: Wot 'ave she done to you, Jenny?

MRS. P.: [*Turning.*] Never you 'eed wot she's done to 'er. You go and open the door. 'Ere, Jenny. Go on inside. Go on now. Before they see yer.

DICK: She's—she's—Best 'ave 'er locked up, mother.

MRS. P.: Open the door, there.

[JENNY *totters out*]

MR. P.: Wot's brought 'er into that state?

NAN: She has seen herself, uncle. There's few can bear that sight. A worm in the dust fears it.

MRS. P.: You don't mean to say as you've cut the parsty.

MR. P.: 'Ush. They'll 'ear yer.

MRS. P.: [*In a blood-curdling voice.*] And look at your uncle's bottle. If I don't give it yer for this. [*A knock.*]

A VOICE WITHOUT: Come on. Come on. I've got no time to waste.

MRS. P.: [*Going to the door with her best society smile.*] I didn't 'ear yer knock. Wot with comp'ny. I 'ope I 'aven't kep you waitin,' I'm sure. [*Peering at visitors.*] Good evenin', sir. Will, fetch chairs for the gentlemen. Why, it's Mr. Drew. Come in, sir. Won't you please ter come in, sir.

DREW: Thank you.

[*Enter* PARSON DREW, CAPTAIN DIXON *and a* CONSTABLE *carrying a handbag.*]

MR. P.: [*Fetching chairs.*] Good evenin', sir.

DREW: Good evenin', Pargetter.

MR. P.: [*To* DIXON.] Good evenin', sir.

DIXON: [*Coldly to* CONSTABLE.] Put that bag on the table.

DREW: Well, Dick. Is that you, Ellen? You grow so fast. Nan. Yes. Yes. Good evening, everybody.

MR. P.: [*In a stage whisper to* MRS. PARGETTER.] 'Ave the table cleared.

DIXON: [*Irritably.*] Never mind the table.

MRS. P.: You must excuse things bein' a bit untidy, sir. Wot with 'avin company, we're all topsy turvy, as you mid say. [*Suavely to* NAN.] Jest take that parsty off the table, Nan, there's a good girl.

NAN: I've done with make-believes, Aunt. One makes believe too long.

MRS. P.: [*To* DREW.] She loves a bit of play-actin', sir. She do it wonderful, considerin'.

DIXON: Oh, Drew. Drew. [*Irritably.*]

MRS. P.: She's been givin' us a bit out of Shakespeare as they call it.

DREW: Yes. Yes. Yes. Now hush, please, a moment everybody. [*Everybody is silent.*] [*Raising a hand.*] I'm afraid we come at a very inconvenient time. But—[*Seeing those in the door.*] Oh, just come in there, will you? Yes. Yes. It's a very pleasant duty. It's not often that I have such a pleasure

as I have to-night. [*Taking chair.*] Yes. Thank you. Sit down, Mr. Dixon.

DIXON: [*Coldly.*] *Captain* Dixon.

DREW: Yes, yes, to be sure. Captain Dixon, to be sure. I beg your pardon, Captain Dixon. I'm sure you'll all be very glad when you hear what it is that makes us interrupt your evening's pleasure.

DIXON: [*Tartly.*] Excuse me. Mr. Drew. But hadn't we better come to business?

DREW: Yes, yes, but——

DIXON: [*Mildly.*] I shall miss the coach back to town.

DREW: O, no, no, no, no. O, no, no, no. Oh, you've ten minutes yet. More. You've got lots of time. You'll hear the horn long before the coach is due.

MRS. P.: Yes, sir. You'll 'ear the horn a long ways off. If it's the coach you want.

GAFFER: The horn. The horn. Gold hoofs beating on the road. [*He advances to the table.*] They beat like the ticking of a 'eart. Soon. Very soon. The golden trump.

MRS. P.: [*Angrily.*] Could ever anything! [*Quietly.*] You old stupe. Take 'im out, Will. Don't let 'im begin in 'ere. [*To* DIXON.] Don't mind 'im, sir. 'E's silly.

[GAFFER *goes to the door and looks out into the moonlight*]

GAFFER: [*At the door.*] Maybe I'll meet 'im on the road.

[*He goes out*]

DREW: One of our—You know, eh. [*Taps his forehead.*]

DIXON: [*Sourly.*] I thought it was another bit out of Shakespeare as they call it.

MR. P.: Yes, sir. 'E talks very strange sometimes.

DREW: Yes, yes, poor fellow.

DIXON: I suppose this is the right house?

DREW: Yes, of course. Yes, certainly, certainly.

DIXON: [*Taking bag and unlocking it.*] I thought it might be the—the—Yes. Ye-es. Very well, then. [*Suddenly.*] Which of you is Nan Hardwick?

NAN: I am that one.

DIXON: Ye-es. You. Very well then. Is that correct, Mr. Drew?

DREW: Certainly. Certainly.

DIXON: Daughter of Mary Hardwick, and of—of Edward Hardwick who was—eh?

NAN: Who was hanged at Gloucester.

DIXON: Of Swanscombe, in the Hundred of—Yes. Very well then. [*Turning to others.*] You certify that this is that Nan Hardwick?

THE OTHERS: Yes, sir. That be 'er.

DIXON: Very well, then. That's not the horn, Drew?

DREW: O, no, no.

DIXON: [*Taking bag and papers out of handbag.*] Have you a pen and ink in the house?

MR. P.: [*Taking them from the dresser.*] This is a pen and ink, sir.

DIXON: Ye-es. [*Writes.*] This pen's—Drew, have you got a pen? [*To* MRS. PAR.] Give me a penwiper. [*He wipes, and then mends pen with a penknife.*] Ye-es. Ye-es. [*Sharply.*]

Nan Hardwick, your father was—er—put to death for stealing a sheep near Aston Magna. No. Don't answer. That is the fact. Ye-es. Very well then. The sheep was the property of Mr. Nicols. Now it has been proved that your father, Edward Hardwick, had nothing to do with that sheep.

NAN: And you come here, do you, to tell me that? You have a thousand men beneath you, a thousand strong men like the man there. And you have judges in scarlet, and lawyers in wigs. And a little child out of the road could have told you that my dad was innocent. A little child of the road. By once looking in his eyes.

DIXON: I can't go into all that. You must keep to the point. [DREW *whispers.*] What? Yes. Yes. I daresay.

DREW: [*To Nan.*] Let Captain Dixon finish what he's got to say.

MRS. P.: Where's yer manners gorn? You wait till afterwards.

DIXON: To continue. The sheep was stolen by Mr. Nicol's shepherd, who was the chief witness against your father.

NAN: The sheep was stolen by Richard Shapland.

DIXON: [*Staring at her.*] Who has since confessed.

ALL: Ah. Confessed. Think of that. There now.

DIXON: A sad miscarriage of justice. Very well then. While we support the laws, we must be content to suffer from their occasional misapplication. [*Glances at his watch.*]

DREW: Lots of time. Lots of time.

DIXON: Ye-es. But in this instance, the Home Office has decided to offer you some compensation.

NAN: Some blood-money. Thirty pieces of silver.

DIXON: No. It's more. It's fifty pounds. [*He empties bag.*] Will you count it over please, before signing the receipt?

NAN: No. No. The blood and tears are sticky on it.

DREW: She's upset. I'll count it.

MR. P.: [*Pouring brandy for* NAN.] 'Ere, Nan. 'Ave just a drop.

[*She refuses*]

OTHERS: Fifty pou-und. Fifty pou-und. Did you ever.

DICK: [*Muttering.*] A 'orse and trap. And furnish a 'ouse.

DREW: Fifty. Would you like to count it over, Pargetter?

MR. P.: No, thanky, sir, I'm sure.

DIXON: [*To Nan.*] Are you satisfied? [*Sharply.*] Nan Hardwick.

NAN: What d'you want more?

DIXON: Are you satisfied that the sum is correct?

NAN: Oh. The money. You know it is. Why go to all this trouble? Give me your pen. There. There's my name to your paper. Received. By me. Fifty pounds in gold.

DIXON: And the date. Ye-es. I'll just add the date. [*To the* CONSTABLE.] Witness it, Horton. [*The man signs. He looks at his watch again.*] I shall miss that coach.

DREW: Won't you think better of it, and stay the night? Stay, man, stay and see the tide. It's a wonderful sight.

DIXON: No, thanks. No, thanks. [*He gathers up his hand-bag.*] Here you are, Horton. [*Gives him bag.*] I hope the money may be a comfort to you. [*To* NAN.] Where can I catch this coach?

MRS. P.: Just down the lane, sir. It is but a step. Keep on right down, sir. You can't miss it, sir.

MR. P.: You'll 'ear the 'arn go, sir.

DIXON AND HORTON: Good night. [*Going.*]

ALL: Good night, sir. Good night, Officer.

DICK: [*To* PARGETTER.] Wouldn't 'e take a drop of somethin'?

MR. P.: Noa. It's not for the likes of us to offer.

DICK: You can't ever tell.

DREW: I'm sure that what we have just heard has given us all a great deal of pleasure. I won't dwell on the satisfaction to yourself, Nan, for fear of giving you pain. But I am sure that your good aunt, who has been so kind to you——

MRS. P.: No more than my sacred dooty, Mr. Drew.

DREW: [*Gallantly.*] I will spare your blushes, Mrs. Pargetter. And all your young friends who are here to-night. I'm sure that they all feel with me——

[*Re-enter* DIXON]

DIXON: Excuse me, Drew. Do show me the way to where the coach passes. These beastly lanes are——

DREW: Yes. Yes. Certainly. Certainly. [*To the Company.*] I must wish you all good night. So sorry to have interrupted your evening's amusement.

MRS. P.: A pleasure I'm sure, sir.

DREW: [*To* NAN.] By the way, Nan. Perhaps I should say Miss Hardwick, now you're an heiress. Mrs. Drew would like to see you at the Rectory to-morrow—She thinks you might like to live with us as our housekeeper.

DIXON: Come on. Come on.

DREW: Coming, Captain Dixon. But we'll go into that to-morrow. Shall we?

NAN: Thank you, sir. I hope you'll thank Mrs. Drew, too, sir. But I shall not come to the Rectory to-morrow. Unless—Unless the fishers bring their take to you. For you to choose your tithe.

DREW: [*Puzzled.*] Well. Ah. Ah yes. Well, think it over. Sleep on it.

NAN: I shall sleep soundly on it.

DREW: Good night, everybody. Now. Captain Dixon.

[*Exit*]

[*Returning.*] Mrs. Pargetter!

MRS. P.: Yes, sir. [*He draws her aside and whispers, pointing to* NAN.]

DREW: [*In stage whisper.*] To bed at once.

[NAN *smiles bitterly*]

MRS. P.: Yes, sir. Pore thing, it's been too much for 'er. I don't wonder.

[*Exit* DREW]

MRS. P.: 'E's gone at last. [*To the others.*] Go on in back to supper. Us'll be with yer in a minute. Shut the door. There's sech a draught.

[*They go*]

DICK: I'll fetch in Miss Nan a bit of supper.

MR. P.: It's a pity you don't 'eed the mote in yer own eye without 'eedin' the camel in yer neighbour's. Go in and see to Jenny.

MR. P.: Well, Nan, it be a long lane as 'as no turning, as they say. I knew thy pore dad when us was boys. When us goe'd a nesting after ardiestraws. Dear, dear. 'E won the prize for

kiddy potatoes, and for kiddy beans. I be glad, that I be, to 'ear—wot we've 'eard to-night.

NAN: So you are glad, are you? Glad.

MRS. P.: If you 'adn't a black 'eart, you'd be glad yourself, I should a-thought. Some people a-got no feelin's.

MR. P.: Fifty pound be a lot of money, too.

NAN: The worth of a man's life 'ad need to be a lot of money.

MR. P.: There's two things you could do with all that money. You could put er into the Bank and that. Or you could—I'd be very glad to borrow it of you, to 'elp me on the farm. And pay you the interest, like.

NAN: And if I'd refuse. What then?

MRS. P.: Refuse? Refuse? I don't doubt you give yerself airs. It's wot we'd expect of yer——

MR. P.: [*Interrupting.*] I'm only asking.—To keep it in the family.

MRS. P.: [*To* PAR.] Asking? Givin' in to 'er wills and 'er won'ts. Wot's asking got to do with it? 'Ere. You're under age. We're yer guardians. *We'll* take care of that money for yer.

NAN: Yes. You'll want some money, for Jenny's portion.

MR. P.: [*Controlling his temper.*] I 'aven't said nothink yet——

MRS. P.: No. You 'aven't got the sperrit of a 'og with the twitters.

MR. P.: [*Angrily.*] I don't want none of *yer* jaw.

MRS. P.: Don't you nag at me, for I won't 'ave it. See?

NAN: The money is mine. Not yours. I have a use for it.

MR. P.: [*To* NAN.] Then I've done with yer. You talk rude to the quality. You give all sorts of talk to—Talk as 'd sick a savage. Do wot y' like with yer money. But you'll make good my Toby jug, at least. Now then.

NAN: Your Toby jug?

MR. P.: You know wot I mean.

NAN: Aha. The little friend. My little friend. [*A cry within.*] That's 'er soul's voice that cry is. So *that* is wot——

MRS. P.: And you 'ad the cold blooded cheek to 'ave your go at the parsty, wot's more.

MR. P.: And—there—I'll leave you to your conscience. [*Going.*]

MRS. P.: Stop a moment, Will. Us'll settle 'er with 'er, onst for all.

NAN: [*Going to the money bag and cutting its tape.*] Yes. We'll settle. Look at it. Look at it. [*She pours the gold into a heap.*] Gold. Gold. Little yellow rounds of metal. Fifty little yellow rounds of metal. This. This is for a man's life. Oh, you little yellow rounds that buy things. Look at 'em. Hear 'em. [*Pause.*] Don't you speak to me. [*Intensely.*] There was a strong man, a kind man. He was forty-nine years old. He was the best thatcher in the three counties. He was the sweetest singer. I've known teams goin' to the field stop to 'ear my dad sing. And the red coats come. And a liar swore. And that strong man was killed. Sudden. That voice of his'n was choked out with a cord. And there was liars, and thieves, and drunken women, and dirty gentlemen. They all stood in the cold to see that man choked. They stop up all night, playing cards, so as they should 'ear 'is singin' stopped. For it goes round the voice the cord do. And they draw a nightcap down so as 'e shan't see 'is girl a-crying. [*Pause.*] And for that, I get little yellow round things. [*Pause.*] And there was

a girl, a young girl, a girl with a sick 'eart. D'you know what came to 'er? You know what came to 'er. She came among them as might have made much of 'er. For she'd 'ave give a lot for a kind word. 'Er 'eart was that broke 'er'd 'ave broke out a-crying at a kind word.

MRS. P.: When you've done with your fal-lals, I'll 'ave my say.

NAN: Don't you speak. Don't you threaten. You'll listen to me. You 'ad me in your power. And wot was good in me you sneered at. And wot was sweet in me, you soured. And wot was bright in me you dulled. I was a fly in the spider's web. And the web came round me and round me, till it was a shroud, till there was no more joy in the world. Till my 'eart was bitter as that ink, and all choked. And for that I get little yellow round things. [*Pause and change of voice.*] And all of it—No need for any of it. My dad's life, and your taunts, and my broke 'eart. All a mistake. A mistake. Somethin' to be put right by fifty pound while a gentleman waits for a coach. 'E thought nothing of it. 'E thought only of getting the coach. 'E didn't even pretend. [*A cry within.*] It were a game to 'im. 'E laughed at it. [*A cry within.*] Yes. She has seen herself. No wonder she cries. She sees the parish dead-cart coming.

[DICK *puts his head in at the door*]

DICK: Mother. Come to Jenny. Quick.

MRS. P.: To 'ell with Jenny. I've somethin' to attend to 'ere.

DICK: She's in a fit or somethink. Us can 'ardly 'old 'er down.

MRS. P.: [*To* NAN.] More of yer work. You wait till I come back.

A GIRL: [*At the door.*] Quick, Mrs. Pargetter.

[MRS. PARGETTER *snatches the brandy bottle and goes out*]

MR. P.: I don't know 'ow all this'll end, Nan.

[*He goes out*]

[*Re-enter* DICK]

DICK: I brought you a little bit o' supper, Miss Nan.

NAN: What then?

DICK: I thought—Won't you sit down and 'ave it, Miss Nan? There. Let me put this chair comferable.

NAN: Why do you bring this to me?

DICK: I thought—some'ow—I thought you'd like a bit of cossitin'.

NAN: I want nothin'. Nothin'.

DICK: Miss Nan. I want just to say. Some'ow, it be 'ard to explain. But I ask—I ask your forgiveness. 'Umbly I ask it. Oh, Miss Nan. My beauti-vul. My beautivul as I wronged.

NAN: As you wronged. Yes?

DICK: I was—I dunno—I was led away, Miss Nan.

NAN: Yes, Dick. You were led away. How were you led away? Why?

DICK: I was that. When I 'eard as your dad was. I mean when I 'eard of your dad. I doan' know. It seemed—I felt some'ow. I be that dry I can't 'ardly speak. Miss Nan——

NAN: You felt some'ow? Yes?

DICK: As your 'air was, was a cord round my throat. Choking. I was sick. I couldn't—no—I couldn't.

NAN: And was that the only reason why?

DICK: Yes, Miss Nan.

NAN: And why did you choose Jenny? My kiss was still warm upon your lips. [*Going to him.*] Your blood was singing in your veins with me, when you turned—Why did you turn to 'er? [*A pause*] She was not a—a gallus-bird. Eh?

[*A pause.* DICK *licks his lips and swallows*]

[*Re-enter* GAFFER *slowly, with a few roses plucked in the garden. He goes to* NAN.]

GAFFER: The moon be at full, O wonder. The cows in the meadows kneel down.

The rabbits be kneelin'. The vlowers in the 'edge do kneel—

Roses for your 'air, my beauty. O my bright 'ansome of the world. [*He gives the roses reverently*] Roses in your 'air. And the bride's 'air loose. [NAN *places a rose in her hair and loosens it about her.*]

NAN: [*Taking some money.*] For a 'eadstone, Gaffer. [*Sharply.*] Well, Dick.

DICK: I was. O, I can't. To show that I 'ad done with yer. I was angry.

NAN: Because I didn't tell you of my dad?

DICK: Yes.

NAN: There be three times, Dick, when no woman can speak. Beautiful times. When 'er 'ears 'er lover, and when 'er gives 'erself, and when 'er little one is born. You—You'd have been the first to stop me if I'd spoken then.

DICK: I thought as you'd—not been straight—I thought——

NAN: And now you turn again from Jenny. Why have you left Jenny, Dick?

GAFFER: [*Jangling and counting money.*]

"Nine. 'Ow the bells do chime,
Ten. There's a path for men."

DICK: Because I don't care for 'er. Because now——

GAFFER: "'Leven. From the earth to 'eaven."

DICK: Be quiet, Gaffer.

NAN: Because?

DICK: O, Miss Nan. It be you as I love. My dad 'ave stop me afore. But now your name be cleared——

NAN: Is that the only reason?

GAFFER: [*Talking through.*] Twelve. Twelve. Us rang out a peal at twelve. Angels. Gold angels. The devil walks the dark at twelve. Ghosts. Ghosts. Behind the white 'edstones. Smite 'em, gold rider. Smite 'em with thy bright sharp spear.

NAN: Is that the only reason? You love me, then?

DICK: Yes. That's the only reason. I love you, Nan.

NAN: And what will my aunt say?

DICK: Damn 'er. It's 'er that came between us.

NAN: I know what you can say to 'er.

DICK: What?

NAN: Go to her now. Take her that bag of money. Tell her she may have that. But that you will marry me, not Jenny. [DICK, *rather staggered, takes up the bag and walks slowly to door*]

DICK: Wouldn't it be better, Miss Nan, if us—if us just told 'er, without—without bein'——

NAN: I knew it. I knew it.

[*A horn is heard faintly off*]

GAFFER: There be a music on the sea, a soft music. The ships be troubled at the music.

NAN: Come here, Dick. They said my dad kill a sheep. A foundered old ewe as'd feel nothin'; 'ardly the knife on 'er throat. And my dad was 'ung; only acos they said 'e kill a beast like that. They choked 'im dead, in front of 'alf a city. But you come. And you 'ave yer love of a girl. You says lovely things to 'er. Things as'd move any girl—and only because you be greedy. Greedy of a mouth agen your mouth; of a girl's lips babblin' love at you. And a sour old woman's word'll make you 'it that girl across the lips you kissed. In ten minutes. You'll take 'er lovin' 'eart and 'er girl's pride, and all 'er joy in the world, and stamp it in the dust. And you'll dance on 'er white body; and all you'll feel is the blood makin' a mess on your boots.

[*The horn blows nearer*]

GAFFER: The horn. The horn. O night owl laughing in the wood.

NAN: And you go to another girl. And you give 'er a joy in the world. And then you see your old love not wot the old woman said. No. But as sweet to the taste, as dear to your greedy mouth. And with gold—yellow round things—to buy vanity. 'Ouses, 'orses, position. Then you come back whining. Whining! For 'er to take you back. So as you mid 'ave that gold.

DICK: O, you can talk. You've a right. But I love you, Nan. I do love yer.

NAN: I see very plain to-night, Dick. I see right, right into you. Right down. You talk o' thieves. You talk o' them as kills—them as leads women wrong. Sinners you calls them. But it be you is the sinner. You kill people's 'earts. You stamp them in the dust, like worms as you tread on in the fields. And under it all will be the women crying, the broken women, the women cast aside. Tramped on. Spat on. As you spat on me. No, no, oh no. Oh young man in your beauty—Young man in your strong hunger. I will spare those women.

DICK: [*Scared, and speaking loudly, so as to attract them in the inner room.*] I never! Mother! Mother!

GAFFER: O Love you be a King. A King.

NAN: I will spare those women. Come here to me.

DICK: Ah! Ah! Mother! [*He backs towards the door.*]

GAFFER: On the road. They come. Gold hoofs. Gold hoofs.

NAN: Spare them. Spare them. Spare them the hell. The hell of the heart-broken. Die—you—die. [*She stabs him with the pastry knife. He falls.*]

DICK: [*Raising himself stupidly.*] The drums be a-roaring. A-roaring. [*He dies.*]

GAFFER: [*Clapping his hands.*] Oh Beauty, beauty. Oh beauty of my white vlower.

[*A murmuring and rushing noise is heard as the tide sweeps up from the sea.*]

GAFFER: [*Shouts.*] It be coming. Out of the wells of the sea. The eagles of the sea hear it. They sharp their beaks.

[*Enter hurriedly the others*]

MRS. P.: [*Running to* DICK.] Dick. Dick. Oh! [*Screams.*] Look at it all smoking.

MR. P.: 'Ere. The brandy. Quick. 'E's gone.

NAN: [*As the noise increases.*] The tide.

GAFFER: The tide.

NAN: [*Laughing.*] The tide coming up the river.

MRS. P.: Take the money, Will. Don't 'eed the brandy.

A GIRL: The pleece, Artie. Get the pleece.

NAN: [*Going to the door as the noise increases.*] A strange fish in the nets to-morrow. [*She goes.*]

GAFFER: Singing. Singing. Roaring it come. Roaring it come. Over the breast. Over the lips. Over the eyes.

[*The horn blows*]

MRS. P.: [*Putting the money hastily in the locker.*] That's something. Wot are we to tell them?

[*The coach-horn blows loudly and clearly*]

GAFFER: The horn! The horn!

CURTAIN

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT

TO

MY WIFE

ARGUMENT

In the years 50 and 49 B. C., Cneius Pompeius Magnus, the head of the patrician party, contested with C. Julius Cæsar, the popular leader, for supreme power in the State. Their jealousy led to the troubles of the Civil War, in which, after many battles, Cneius Pompeius Magnus was miserably killed.

ACT I. The determination of Pompey to fight with his rival, then marching upon Rome.

ACT II. The triumph of Pompey's generalship at Dyrrachium. His overthrow by the generals of his staff. His defeat at Pharsalia.

ACT III. The death of that great ruler on the seashore of Pelusium in Egypt.

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT

PERSONS

Antistia.
Philip.
A Lute-Girl.
Cornelia.
Julia.
Q. Caecilius Metellus Pius Scipio.
Cneius Pompeius Magnus (called Pompey the Great).
Cneius Pompeius Theophanes.
Marcus Porcius Cato.
A Gaulish Lancer.
Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus.
Cotta, a Centurion.
Marcus Acilius Glabrio.
Lucius Lucceius.
Lucius Afranius.
Publius Lentulus Spinther.
A Ship-Captain.
A Ship-Boy.
A Mate.
A Boatswain.
Achillas Egyptian.
Lucius Septimius.
Centurions, Sentries, Soldiers, Trumpeters, Sailors.

	Scene.	Time.
Act I.	Rome.	January A. U. C. 705 (B. C. 50).
Act II.	Dyrrachium.	July A. U. C. 706.
	Pharsalia.	August A. U. C. 706 (June B. C. 48)
Act III.	Pelusium.	September A. U. C. 706 (Aug. B. C. 48).

THE TRAGEDY OF POMPEY THE GREAT

ACT I

A room in POMPEY'S *house near Rome. Walls hung with draperies of a dark blue. Doors curtained. Balcony, open, showing distant lights. A gong and mallet. Wine, glasses, etc. Papers in a casket. Lamps.*

Horns without as troops pass. ANTISTIA *alone, lighting lamps with a taper.*

ANTISTIA: [*Looking towards the window.*] More soldiers. Blow your horns. Spread your colours, ensign. Your colours'll be dust the sooner. Your breath will be in the wind, a little noise in the night. That's what you come to, soldiers. Dust, and a noise in the trees. Dust, and the window rattling. No more flags and horns then. [*Lighting the last lamp.*] I wish I knew the rights of it. [*Settling books on table.*] I wish Philip would come.

A VOICE: [*Without, in the balcony.*] Pompey.

ANTISTIA: What was that?

THE VOICE: Pompey.

ANTISTIA: [*Frightened.*] Who calls Pompey?

THE VOICE: Not so loud. Not so loud, Pompey.

ANTISTIA: What is it? What d' you want with Pompey?

THE VOICE: Philip must tell Pompey at once.

ANTISTIA: What must he tell him?

THE VOICE: To stamp his foot at once.

ANTISTIA: To stamp his foot at once?

THE VOICE: [*Amid laughter.*] Stamp your foot, Pompey. Aha! Ha! Pompey.

ANTISTIA: [*Going to the window.*] What's this? Who are you?

THE VOICE: [*Going.*] Aha! Pompey. Stamp your feet, Pompey.

ANTISTIA: [*Going to a door* R. *scared.*] Philip, Philip.

[*Enter* PHILIP *with tray*]

PHILIP: [*Putting down tray.*] What's the matter? What's happened?

ANTISTIA: There was a voice. A voice. Something at the window. Jeering Pompey.

PHILIP: [*Opening window.*] Come out of that. There's no one there now. Was it a man?

ANTISTIA: There was no one. It had a man's voice. It spoke. It laughed.

PHILIP: It's gone. It's gone, my dear. Don't. Don't. It's gone.

ANTISTIA: They say that the dead come back. To cry in the night [*pause*] whenever bad times are coming. Dead men's souls. They want blood. Licking. Licking blood in the night. Whenever Rome's in danger.

PHILIP: Hush. Hush. Don't talk such things. It gives them life. What was it saying?

THE VOICE: Stamp your foot, Pompey. Stamp your foot, Pompey.

ANTISTIA: Ah!

PHILIP: [*Exorcising at window, with things from tray.*] Wine for blood. [*Pours wine.*] Bread for flesh. [*Breaks bread.*]

Salt for life. [*Flings salt.*] A cloak of blue on Rome. A net of gold over this house. To the desert. To the night without stars. To the wastes of the sea. To the two-forked flame. [*Returning heavily.*] God save my dear master, Pompey. I fear there's trouble coming.

ANTISTIA: [*Hysterically.*] Ah! Ah!

PHILIP: [*Pouring water.*] Drink this. Drink this. I'll fetch another glass.

ANTISTIA: [*Hysterically.*] Not off that tray. Not off that tray.

PHILIP: There. There. God save us! Why, Antistia, they've no power.

ANTISTIA: I see the marching of armies. Dust. Dust. That is what the trumpets mean. War. Civil War. Pompey and Cæsar. Like eagles struggling.

PHILIP: No. No. Don't say that. You bring things to pass.

ANTISTIA: What else could it mean? What did it mean?

PHILIP: [*Distractedly.*] I don't rightly know what it said.

ANTISTIA: About stamping? About Pompey stamping?

PHILIP: Pompey said it. In the Senate yesterday. Reports came in. There was a panic. The Senators were at their wits' ends. News came that Cæsar was marching on Rome. They asked Pompey if he had an army. If he could defend them.

ANTISTIA: Is Cæsar coming?

PHILIP: It was one of these wild rumours.

ANTISTIA: What did Pompey say?

PHILIP: He said if he stamped his foot, soldiers would spring up all over Italy. Armies of soldiers. To drive Cæsar back into Gaul.

ANTISTIA: And now he must stamp his foot. Cæsar's on the road with his army.

PHILIP: It's time for the house to shake when the doorposts quarrel. [*Pausing at distant tumult.*]

ANTISTIA: They're proud ones, to set the world on fire so as one of them may warm his hands.

PHILIP: Pompey's only defending the State. He thinks he's a great one, Cæsar does, now that he's conquered Gaul. What are the Gauls? The Gauls are naked heathen, with copper swords like the savages. Why, Cæsar would never have been anybody if Pompey hadn't backed him.

ANTISTIA: That's reason enough for him to fight Pompey now.

PHILIP: Pompey made him what he is. Pompey got him his place in Gaul. He was no one before that. [*Pause.*] And now he hopes to put Pompey down. So he can rule Rome instead. Put my master Pompey down.

ANTISTIA: I suppose Cæsar couldn't beat Pompey, Philip?

PHILIP: Antistia. [*Solemnly.*] Don't you talk like that, Antistia. I believe wherever Pompey goes, there goes a god in front of him. Like fire. It's that makes him what he is. Oh, my dear beloved master. I'm that drove mad, I can't hardly talk of it. That he should have a civil war with Cæsar. And him only newly married.

ANTISTIA: It was a civil war that first made Pompey famous, Philip.

PHILIP: He was with Sulla, against Marius. In the civil wars then. And ever since then he's gone on. Just as though a god went before him, brushing a road for him. You would see nothing but dangers all round. And Pompey would ride

up. And [*he blows in his hand*] puff. They'd fade. They'd go. [*Pause.*] I've seen all Rome out on the roofs to see my master, Pompey. Triumph? There were horns blowing, you couldn't hear. And forty kings marching barefoot in the streets. I've seen him grow to be the greatest man in the world.

ANTISTIA: Eh? The greatest man in the world. And all through being with Sulla in the civil war. Supposing he were not great, Philip. Only a big clay statue. A statue propped up by sticks. A clay thing, gilded. Rats gnawing at it. The wind shaking it. The sun cracking it. [*Pause.*] And dead men, Philip. Dead men underneath it in the dust, fumbling at it to bring it down.

PHILIP: Antistia.

ANTISTIA: Time brings all about, they say. You spoke of Sulla, Philip. I was a little girl then, when Marius and Sulla fought. My father was a centurion under Marius. I never told you that. What do you know of me, Philip, except that I'm to marry you? I was in the street outside our house, and some men came across the road. They patted my head and asked if my father was upstairs. I said yes, Philip. And they went in and brought him out. Out to the door in the sun. Some boys gathered to watch. I ran up to him, Philip, to show him my doll. And one of the men said, "We'll give you Marius." He was behind my father. He swung his arm right back like this, to give his sword a sweep. He knocked my dada down with a great hack on the neck, and they all stabbed him as he fell. One of the men said, "There's your dada, little girl; run and tell mother." And then one of the boys knelt down and stole his sandals, and another snatched my doll away. Time brings all about, Philip. All the lives spilt then by Pompey and Sulla. They are coming out of the night. Out of Spain. Out of Rome. Out of Asia. Souls have power, Philip, even in the darkness, when the time comes.

PHILIP: [*Awed.*] What time?

ANTISTIA: Pompey's time. There. There. It's beginning. [*Noise of a tumult. The horns of Soldiers.*]

PHILIP: [*At window.*] Some of Rome seems to be burning. Pray God the Senate's safe. [*Pause.*] We shall have to put off our marriage, Antistia.

ANTISTIA: Why, thus it is. We put off and put off till youth's gone, and strength's gone, and beauty's gone. Till two dry sticks mumble by the fire together, wondering what there was in life, when the sap ran.

PHILIP: I must be with my master, Antistia.

ANTISTIA: Your master. When you kiss the dry old hag, Philip, you'll remember these arms that lay wide on the bed, waiting, empty. Years. You'll remember this beauty. All this beauty. That would have borne you sons; but for your master. [*A noise of a lute off.*] Your mistress too, perhaps. Here she comes. Here comes the young wife, that will have little joy of her man. She with her lute girl, twanging a march for her. Here she comes. Open the door.

PHILIP: Our mistress.

[*Enter* CORNELIA *and* JULIA. *The* SERVANTS *place chairs for the ladies*]

CORN.: That will do, Antistia. Philip, you may go. [*Exeunt* PHILIP *and* ANTISTIA.]

JULIA: But tell me. What's going to happen? Is Cæsar really going to fight your husband, or it is only a feint to get your husband out of Rome?

CORN.: I don't know what to think, Julia. He's a danger. He's got such power with the mob. He's got this army in Gaul. Of course, that's a very great menace.

JULIA: But what are his plans? What does he want?

CORN.: He wants to rule Rome. He plans to be elected Consul. He is lying in Gaul there, thinking, I think, to frighten every one into electing him.

JULIA: I wish you could make your husband put down all this rioting. [*Noise without.*]

CORN.: [*Going to the window.*] I wish my father would come in, Julia, I'm anxious. What has the Senate decided? [*She walks up and down.*]

JULIA: That Cæsar must dismiss his army. I don't think it's anything to make you anxious. How is your father? What does he think?

CORN.: He thinks that my husband ought to put Cæsar down with a strong hand.

A VOICE WITHOUT: Present arms.

CORN.: Who's that? Come in. [*The door is shaken and opened violently.*]

[*Enter her father,* METELLUS SCIPIO]

Father.

JULIA: We were just talking about you.

MET.: Where's your husband? Is he here? Has he been here?

CORN.: No, father. What is it?

MET.: Still at the House? He must have had my note. Has he sent round to you?

CORN.: No. What has happened?

MET.: I must talk to you, Cornelia.

JULIA: [*Rising.*] Good-bye, dear.

MET.: No, Cornelia. She mustn't go. You'll have to sleep here, my dear girl. The streets aren't safe to-night. Sit down. Please sit down. We're all in the same boat. [*Pause.*] Cornelia. What's your husband going to do?

CORN.: Father. But I don't know. He tells me nothing. Nothing at least that is not common knowledge.

MET.: I've had letters. Cæsar's advancing into Italy. With all his army.

CORN.: To fight us? To attack Rome?

MET.: Yes. It's what I always feared. But I never thought the man would be such a blackguard.

CORN.: Does my husband know of this?

MET.: Yes. I sent word to him at the Senate to meet me here. I had to ride out to the camp. Cornelia. I don't understand your husband. My dear girl, he's been playing with the situation. I don't think you understand even now. It means that the whole of Rome is being handed over to a political brigand. All the governing classes, the religion of our fathers, all that has made Rome great. This cut-throat is marching to destroy it. Something happened at the camp.

CORN.: What, father?

MET.: The men. The soldiers. Roman soldiers. Men who had eaten the bread and salt. They refused duty. Romans. Bribed to that. By this upstart, Cæsar.

CORN.: They will stand and see Rome sacked by this outlaw.

MET.: I must see your husband. He's played with us. He must save us.

CORN.: There. There. He's coming. There's the sentry.

A VOICE WITHOUT: Attention. Eyes right.

MET.: Thank God.

A VOICE WITHOUT: Present arms.

CRIES: Hail! Pompey. Imperator. [*A trumpet blows a flourish.*]

A VOICE WITHOUT: Company. By the right. Quick. March.

[PHILIP *enters, opening doors wide, saluting, showing the fasces lining the door. Enter* POMPEY. *He carries a despatch box.* METELLUS *salutes.*]

[*Exit* PHILIP. *Doors shut*]

POMPEY: Ah, Julia. Ah, Cornelia. [*He goes to her, and looks into her eyes.*] Ah, beloved. [*Slowly.*] There will be always peace for me, in that calm soul. [*Turning wearily.*] I think that Sertorius was right, Julia.

JULIA: Why?

POMPEY: In our long Spanish wars, he planned to steal away to the Fortunate Islands. He could be quiet a little there. [*He goes to table dejectedly.*]

MET.: You got my note?

POMPEY: Yes. Yes. [*He sits like one stunned.*]

MET.: Man. What are you going to do? Cæsar's marching on Rome with forty thousand men.

CORN.: But you can check him. You must.

MET.: Do you understand? The whole—Does the Senate know?

POMPEY: [*Opening his despatch box.*] Sit down, dear. [*To* CORNELIA.] Sit down. The Senate knows. There were seven hundred of us in the Senate. Seven hundred of the best men in Rome, sitting there, at sunset, waiting. I had to stand up,

among them. I had to tell them that one who—that a man whom I—a man very dear to me—was marching. With an army. Against this Rome. To destroy all that that great house, in generations of honour, has built up here, of virtue, of justice, of freedom, to the wonder of the world.

MET.: Yes. Go on. Go on.

CORN.: What are they going to do?

POMPEY: Many there were in the pay of—that man.

MET.: How did they take it?

POMPEY: They were silent. But a murmur ran through the house. They moved in their chairs. Even those most glad were awed. [*Pause.*] Then Tullus, a man who owes his bread to me. He is in Cæsar's pay now. Rose up smiling. To ask me what troops I had for the defence of Rome.

MET.: Yes. And you, the guardian of Rome, what troops have you?

POMPEY: I said that with the two legions sent back from Gaul, and with those reserves called up from the country, I might have thirty thousand men.

MET.: What is all this talk of you might have? Those two legions are in Cæsar's pay. They're in mutiny at the camp. They're drawn up there. Ranged under the eagles. Their colonels are Cæsar's, body and soul. They refuse to move. As for your reserves, they're with the people. They're all for Cæsar. They came crowding out of their tents crying, Peace! Peace! They won't fight. You've mocked us. You've tricked us. You've betrayed Rome.

POMPEY: So they said in the Senate.

MET.: Why did you not prepare for this? You've had months in which to prepare?

POMPEY: I have prepared for it, Metellus. But I did not expect it. I thought that a noble act would be remembered, for more than twenty years. I thought that this Rome would be more to a man than a lust for power. And old friendship, I thought something.

MET.: I've no patience with you. [*He sits with twitching hands.*]—[*Starting up.*] Well. We know what you haven't done. At least tell us what you have done.

POMPEY: Yes. I'll tell you, Metellus. [*Pause.*] When this began between us, I thought of my own time under Sulla. I'd carried the eagles into Africa. I was a young man, then. I did rash things. But I was lucky. I conquered Africa. Sulla sent word to me then, to disband my army, and return. [*To* JULIA *and* CORNELIA.] [*Pause.*] I resented Sulla's order. My soldiers resented it. They asked me to be their King in Africa. I obeyed Sulla. I thought—if I did—it might be easier—for the next young conqueror—to obey, too. Not to cause civil war.

CORN.: He thought—we both thought, father, that Cæsar would remember that. We had planned how all our party, all the Senate even, should go out into the fields to welcome Cæsar. As Sulla welcomed my husband then. If he came home alone. Disbanding his army. That would have been a triumph for Cæsar greater than any Consulship. But Cæsar only thinks of present power. He would see the glory of Rome pass rather than not see that.

POMPEY: I did not think that Cæsar would be blind to the glory of Rome. [*Going to the window.*]

MET.: I'll quote some other words to you. Something which you said once in Sicily. "What is all this talk of law," you said, "to us that have swords by our sides?" What? You remember those words? Will you sit still, and see Rome sacked? See the rabble make beastly all that seven centuries has made here? See their filthy hands laid—laid on these delicate ladies? See

our temples spoiled that their rat-faced brats may grow up to eat free bread, and loaf and spit outside the beer-shops. Pah! What did the Senate say?

POMPEY: They gave me absolute power here.

MET.: What? Then send out your press. Bill every able-bodied man. Bill the women if the men won't come.

POMPEY: No, Metellus. Not that.

MET.: What then, man? [CORNELIA *interposes. Speaking to her husband.*]

CORN.: It is a question now, dear heart, of standing for the right. The right side is always the weaker side. War is terrible. It's such a loathsome kind of spiritual death. But it is better to have war, than to see law set aside. The will of Rome must not be slighted. I don't mean the popular cry. That is all for Cæsar now, dear. It was all for you once. It will be again. I mean all the burning thought of so many generations of our fathers. That must not be set aside for the lust of one man. It is the duty of a Roman, dear heart, to go out under the eagles to defend that burning thought, the Will of Rome. Even if he goes alone. And you will not go alone. The souls of our fathers will march with you. And if you die, dear one, defending what they died to make, you will die as I would have my lover die.

POMPEY: Ah! Cornelia. You make death hard. But it would be sweet to die so for you. To die. To join that Senate of the old Romans; the wise ones. To bring them news of Rome there. In the shadows.

CORN.: Saying that you come crowned. Having played the Roman. "Having obeyed their laws."

MET.: [*Quickly.*] Go on, girl. Oh, move him, Cornelia. Goad him to action. I cannot. For Rome's sake. Move him. Get him out of this child's mood.

POMPEY: Yes. Yes. Yes. [*Slowly.*] I shall fight Cæsar. [*Sharply.*]

MET.: Ah! [*Excitedly.*] But at once. Give him no time to win recruits by success. Give them no time here. The rabble don't hesitate. They don't understand a man who hesitates. Give me all the cavalry. Look. I'll mount six cohorts of slingers. I can worry him with those.

POMPEY: Where's the map? [*He quickly takes map from wall.*] It's the effect here, not the beating of Cæsar. We must stiffen the towns against him. Show them that they'll have to back their choice with their blood. That'll check his advance.

MET.: Cæsar's quick, mind. He marches light, and he comes a devil of a pace. [*Musingly.*]

POMPEY: You say he's got forty thousand men? Let's see your despatch. Who sent it? [*Taking paper.*] Can you trust this man?

MET.: Yes. A clever young fellow.

POMPEY: Young? Where's he served?

MET.: He was on Crassus' staff in Parthia. In the smash.

POMPEY: I don't trust ghosts.

MET.: Ghosts?

POMPEY: What escapes when an army's destroyed like Crassus'? [*Reading.*] Forty thousand men. Shrewd. This is a shrewd lad, Metellus. He's read a lot of school-books, this man. Come. Forty thousand?

MET.: Yes.

POMPEY: No. It's not possible, Metellus. This is politics. Not war. He's forcing our hand. His army's miles away. He's rushing the frontier with a few picked men. The pick of

his light foot, and these light Gaulish lancers. It's a bold dash to put all Rome in a panic.

MET.: [*Biting his nails.*] That's not what you'd have done.

POMPEY: That's how I know I'm right. [*Standing.*] Take the cavalry. Get into touch with him. Harass him. Hang on to him. Worry him all the time. I'll come on with all I can get.

MET.: Take the gladiators.

POMPEY: No. This is a Roman question. No paid slaves shall decide Rome's fate.

MET.: We shall be a desperate lot without them.

CORN.: The Navy. Land men from the ships.

MET.: They can't march. This campaign is a race.

POMPEY: No. No. Look. [*Excitedly.*] I'll send gallopers to the fleet at Brindisi. I'll tell them to lash north, forced rowing. They'd catch him at Pisaurum. They could cut in on his left flank. So much for the attack. The city here's the problem.

MET.: Damn the city here. The city's for the winner. Always.

POMPEY: [*Musing.*] Cæsar's got an army in occupation here already. Now to secure Rome.

MET.: [*Quickly.*] The patricians. Let the patricians form a Committee of Public Safety. They'll settle Cæsar's mobs.

CORN.: No. No. There'd be massacre all over Rome. All frightened men are merciless.

MET.: Be quiet, girl. Yes, man.

POMPEY: No. That's the wild thing the desperate man

always does to make his cause more desperate. It would madden the mob against us. Our task is to win the mob.

CORN.: Leave Cato in command here.

MET.: What?

CORN.: Let Cato raise a force purely to defend Rome. Not a party force at all.

POMPEY: Yes, Cato. He stands outside parties. He has power over both.

MET.: No, I say. Power? That man with power. Bah! He reminds every one of grandpapa. That's why he's popular.

POMPEY: It's popularity that's wanted.

MET.: It's power that's wanted. A few crucified mutineers. Not Cato telling us of good King Numa.

POMPEY: [*Picking up the hammer of his gong.*] We'll send for Cato.

MET.: No. No.

POMPEY: Yes.

MET.: Wait a minute.

POMPEY: Well?

MET.: We want a soldier here.

POMPEY: We want a man whom everybody can trust.

MET.: Cato's not firm enough.

POMPEY: I want Rome calm, not intimidated.

MET.: I'm not going to serve if that man's left behind in Rome.

POMPEY: Oh, don't say that. What are your reasons against Cato? In this instance.

MET.: How will Cato deal with the mutineers in camp?

POMPEY: Ah! There. [*Pause.*] Yes. We can't be hard on those poor fellows. Try and see it as they see it. They've had the choice of refusing duty or beginning a civil war.

MET.: A soldier's first duty is obedience.

POMPEY: Is it? I'd rather have him a man first, myself. Only very good soldiers mutiny. Did you never notice that?

MET.: No. Nor you. They must be made examples of.

POMPEY: [*Smiling.*] Come. Some wine, Metellus.

MET.: [*Crossly.*] This isn't a time for wine. [*He stalks up and down the room.*] Suppose we're beaten. I tell you if we're beaten you'll want more than old Father Cato here. You'll want a man to stamp out Cæsar's faction. I'd stop their smiling. By the time Cæsar stormed Rome he'd find few of his friends left. I'd make Rome so sick with blood. By. She'd think no more of Cæsar.

POMPEY: My God! The streets ran blood. In Sulla's time. That once. The carts drove over them.

MET.: That was child's play to what this will be.

POMPEY: Yes. Suppose we're beaten. Rome stormed. No, no, never! [*He flings the map aside.*] No. I'll give up Italy rather. I will not fight in Italy. Cæsar's rabble shall have no excuse for sacking Rome.

MET.: What? [*A pause.*] Where will you fight him then? In Spain, where your army is?

CORN.: Not in Spain.

MET.: Why not in Spain?

POMPEY: No. You know the proverb. Spain's a country where a big army starves and a little army gets beaten. I

know, I've fought there. And it's far from Rome, and too near Gaul. No, Macedonia. We'll go over with the fleet to Macedonia. There are five good legions from Crassus' smash in Macedonia. We'll prepare an army there.

MET.: Yes. But your friends in Rome. Our party here? The Senate? The Consuls?

POMPEY: They must come with us at once to Brindisi, where the fleet lies. We'll take ship there. [*Writing.*] I'm writing to Domitius at Corfinium, to join me instantly with his twenty cohorts. [*Musing.*] I wonder. If he stays, he will be invested. And he will stay, he's as obstinate as a mule. If he marches south at once we shall have twenty thousand. If not, we must leave him to his fate. I must abandon Italy.

MET.: [*Slowly.*] There's something in it. Yes. I wonder.

POMPEY: It's not so risky. Fighting now is backing losing cards.

MET.: We shall lose friends.

POMPEY: We shall gain time.

MET.: Let's see the map. [*He takes another map.*] I like it. Yes. It's a good move.

POMPEY: Cæsar will attack my army in Spain, first.

MET.: Afraid of its invading his dear Gaul, you mean?

POMPEY: He'll have no choice in the matter. He's got no ships to follow us. I've got the Navy. While he's building ships, I'll build an Army. If he fights my generals in Spain, it will be a year before he can follow me. We shall have a great army by that time.

MET.: Yes. An army, eh? Macedonian phalanx, eh? We'll send out a fiery sign through Macedonia. All the swords-

men of the hills will come. Out of Dacia, out of Thrace. Jove, what an army! With Egypt at your back, too.

POMPEY: Yes. Egypt's full of my old soldiers. We can always fall back on King Ptolemy. [*He becomes sad.*] Ah, well. Ah, well.

CORN.: What is it?

POMPEY: [*Quickly.*] Nothing. [*He rises.*] I was thinking of all this kingliness wandering in little wild Greek towns.

CORN.: The kingly mind always lives in a kingly city.

POMPEY: [*Eagerly.*] Ah! Who said that?

CORN.: You said it.

POMPEY: Ah. Where's the fire that scatters those sparks? Why doesn't it burn in us always?

MET.: [*Excitedly.*] It's burning now. Look here. Listen. Look here. Your idea of Macedonia. Splendid! Cæsar won't follow. [*Slapping the table.*] He'll be afraid. Part the world between you. Let Cæsar keep the West. You be King in the East. Build up another Rome in Athens. With you in the East, we could do what Alexander did. We could——

POMPEY: No more ambitions, Metellus. You see where ambition leads.

MET.: [*Flushed.*] You wait till you see those Dacians. Big, black, clean-limbed fellows, Julia, with swords and steel shields. They charge like cavalry. [*He fills wine.*]

POMPEY: So, Macedonia.

MET.: Yes, Macedonia.

CORN.: When?

POMPEY: Now, dear.

CORN.: To-night?

POMPEY: It doesn't give you much time. It will be hard for you to leave all your pretty things behind.

CORN.: I was thinking about your night's rest. Life is book and picture to me. All that is Rome to us comes with us.

MET.: Well then [*rolling up the map with a click*], boot and saddle.

POMPEY: Take what men you have, Metellus. And press post horses. You'll want my orders though. [*He strikes the gong.*]

[*Enter* PHILIP]

PHILIP: Sir.

POMPEY: Ask Theophanes to speak to me a moment.

[*Exit* PHILIP]

MET.: That Greek writer-fellow. I don't know how you stand that man.

[*Enter* THEOPHANES, *who bows and is saluted*]

POMPEY: Sit down. [*He takes papers from despatch box.*] We're going to Macedonia. We take ship at Brindisi. These orders to our party. Have them filled in and sent round.

THEO.: Yes. But you won't want them.

POMPEY: You mean that—What do you mean?

THEO.: I mean, you won't want them. Cæsar's at Cremona. He's not marching on Rome. He's encamped in his own province. It was a false alarm.

ALL: What?

POMPEY: How do you know that?

THEO.: Labienus has just come in. Cæsar's right-hand man. I've been talking to him. Cæsar's sending messengers with new proposals to you. He's not marching on Rome.

MET.: So we go on again.

POMPEY: What are the new proposals? Does he know?

THEO.: [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] His men are beginning to shrink, I suppose, now that it comes to the touch. I don't blame 'em.

JULIA: Do you think it's an excuse to gain time?

CORN.: Ah, no, Julia. Let us give Cæsar credit for a little nobleness.

MET.: Pah! He was in Catiline's conspiracy. It was proved beyond a doubt. Well, Pompey. What are you going to do?

POMPEY: It is very wonderful. I must see Cato. [*Going.*]

MET.: The lath and plaster Spartan. Why?

THEO.: He's here.

[CATO, *in black robes, enters. He stands with arms folded, looking at them all*]

MET.: Well, sir?

POMPEY: Yes, Cato?

CORN.: You've heard? Won't you sit down?

CATO.: So this is the family party. Well, Pompey. Now I see the drags that hinder your honesty. [*To* JULIA.] You. The critic. You with neither art nor brain. Thinking you show both by condemning them in others.

JULIA: Do you show art and brain by condemning me?

CATO: Look into your heart, woman.

CATO: [*To* METELLUS.] You, sir. The General. A tailor and a love affair made you a General. Not war. War doesn't make your kind. But you long for war. You would shriek

your country into war, any day, sir. So that humble brave men might make pickings for you. Invitations. Gold. What you call love affairs. Fame. [*To* THEOPHANES, *while* METELLUS *looks him up and down.*] I don't know you, sir.

THEO.: A contributor to Time's waste-paper basket.

CATO: Ah! [*To* POMPEY.] And you, the mischief-maker, the genius. Well, which of us was right, Pompey?

POMPEY: You were right. But I have acted more friendly than Cæsar.

CATO: You have made the mischief. Can you unmake it?

POMPEY: Can you unmake it?

CATO: I? I am going into Sicily. You forget. I am Governor there.

CORN.: But now. In this moment of truce. Surely it can be remedied?

CATO: Yes. At a price.

POMPEY: How?

CATO.: You must go alone, on foot, to Cæsar.

POMPEY: Never.

CATO: And tell him that you come to save Rome from civil war. That a man's pride is a little thing to that. And that so you have put by your greatness.

CORN.: Ah! Ah! [*She watches* POMPEY's *face. All turn to* POMPEY.]

POMPEY: No. I have been a King here. I have been like God here. Kings have come to me on their knees. Cæsar. Cæsar's. I made Cæsar by a stroke of my pen. No. Ah, no.

CATO: Cæsar would be shamed to tears, Pompey. Would not that victory content you?

POMPEY: I cannot. No, I cannot.

CATO: Not to save Rome, Pompey?

POMPEY: No. I should be a mock. No. No.

CORN.: You would be a fire, Pompey, for all time. All the lamps of the world would be kindled at that nobleness.

POMPEY: You wish it, too, dear heart?

CORN.: [*Softly.*] I wish it.

POMPEY: [*Looking round.*] To a young man. Whom I have made. Oh, Cato, Cato! Is kindness to a friend only a bitter form of suicide? [*He fumbles at the clasp of his purple.*] Very well, I will go, Marcus. [*He slings his purple aside.*]

CATO: I thought you were Pompey the Little. I wronged you.

MET.: [*To* THEOPHANES.] So. [*They exchange glances.*]

POMPEY: Old man. Old man.

[*A noise without. Cries. A sentry calls "Halt." Struggling. Shouts of "Stand back." "Let me in." The spears rattle. The door is shaken.*]

THEO.: [*Opening door.*] What's this? [*Pause.*] Let him in, Sentry.

[*Enter filthy* Horseman, *dust to the eyes, tottering. The door is left open, showing* Soldiers.]

MET.: One of Cæsar's lancers.

THEO.: A deserter, eh?

THE MAN: [*Gasping.*] Which of you is the lord?

POMPEY: [*Pouring wine for him.*] I am he. Drink this. Take your time. What is it?

THE MAN: [*Spilling his drink like a man half dead of thirst.*] Cæsar! Cæsar! I escaped last night. Cæsar!

CORN. What?

THE MAN: He's crossed the Rubicon. With all his army. Marching on Rome. Be here in two days. [*A pause.*]

POMPEY: [*Resuming his purple.*] That settles it. There can be no treaty now.

CORN.: So war has begun.

POMPEY: [*Sadly.*] There it is. Only it is more terrible now. More terrible than it was. [*Turning to go.*] It must be war now to the end.

MET.: [*Picking up the orders from the table and slapping them to command attention.*] And now. To Brindisi. [*He walks briskly towards the door, but halts opposite* CATO, *at whom he glares.* POMPEY *and* CORNELIA *halt to watch him.*] Well, sir. My Conscript Father. Will you crawl before Cæsar now, sir? It is long since a Roman bade his King to lick the dust before a traitor. You and your kind may sue to such. Rome puts other thoughts into our hearts.

CATO: There are two Romes, Metellus. One built of brick by hodsmen. But the Rome I serve glimmers in the uplifted heart. It is a court for the calm gods. That Rome. Let me not shame that city. Advance the eagles.

A VOICE WITHOUT: Present arms.

[*A trumpet blows a blast*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

Scene I

[*Staff-officer's tent at Durazzo. Walls of plain canvas. Canvas door running on rings at back R. Smaller canvas door at back L. Table and camp-chairs. Everything bare and severe.*]
Domitius, Lentulus, Theophanes, *at the table.*]

Domi.: So it goes on. And Spain is lost. Look at this position here. Cæsar has shut us in here like so many sheep in a pen. Has Pompey no pride? Or has he grown besotted?

Theo.: Flaccus is raiding Cæsar's lines this morning. He will attack them in three places. And break them.

Domi.: [*Fiercely.*] Flaccus is a boy. A whole year wasted, and half the empire lost.

[*Enter* Pompey *hurriedly. They salute*]

Pompey: Good morning. I have called you all together to tell you of the loss of my Spanish army, lately commanded by Afranius. We had expected victory, from Afranius' letters. But we are soldiers. We know what Fortune is in war. We are not merchants, to cast him for failing.

Domi.: We have given up Italy, and thrown away Spain. Africa is invaded and Sicily taken. We have given up and drawn back everywhere. And why? That we might come here to be cooped up by an army half our size. I want to know why? We all want to know why.

Pompey: I remember Sulla saying that he could make an army love him by talking to the privates occasionally. But that no amount of talking would make his generals love his ideas. Be content. And bide my time.

Lent.: Magnus. I am not given to criticism; but this biding time is ruin. We are losing allies; we are losing Rome. Rome

looked to you to crush this upstart. Instead of that you have let a rebellion grow into a civil war. You have watched your adherents stamped out piecemeal. You have done nothing.

POMPEY: Wait.

DOMI.: We have waited for a year.

POMPEY: I ask you to wait a little longer.

LENT.: Magnus, while we wait, the rabble is stamping out aristocracy throughout the world. [*He rises.*]

POMPEY: Sit down, Lentulus. I tell you to wait. The war is in my hand.

DOMI.: War is in the hands of the man who strikes. [*He thrusts aside the lesser door.*] There. Among the crags there. By the pine-clump. In that great red heap like an iron mine. That is Cæsar's camp. I've been out there night after night, worming over rocks and down gullies, keeping my course by the stars, so that, when a chance came, I could take an army into that camp blindfold. I've a map here. [*Throws down a paper.*] Those red dots are the sentries. Each dot was made at the risk of my heart's blood. I've grovelled in the earth before all those sentries, praying for the moon to go in, while they talked of their love-affairs. I've seen the sergeant coming his rounds with a lantern, and shut my eyes lest they should gleam, and betray me. I could take that camp with two legions in the blackest night of the year. This war is breaking the world in two. And you send Flaccus with a corporal's guard to pull down a hundred yards of paling. Justify that, before you tell me to wait.

POMPEY: Flaccus is fighting the decisive battle of the war.

LENT.: This is trifling. [*He rises and moves away.*]

DOMI.: The decisive. I will tell you what a decisive battle is. I took part in one for you at Massilia three months ago. At the

end of that siege, there was no city. There were no people. Only some deathsheads dying of plague, and a few madmen on the walls. And outside, there were towers flinging fires at us, and slings flinging rocks at us, and miles of army coming up to the sack. That was a decisive battle.

POMPEY: Domitius, when a man thinks fixedly of anything, desiring it with his whole nature, he creates a strong pitiless devil.

Domitius, you are given up to a devil. A devil of lust for battle. You are fiercer than a devil, for when there is no enemy you fight your friends, and when there are no friends you fight yourself. And when you have torn yourself bloody you fight ideas, not because you understand them, and hate them, but because when you are not fighting you are nothing. I fear you, Domitius. A man's friends are those who understand his ideas, and advance them. You are Cæsar's friend, Domitius.

DOMI.: [*Intensely.*] You killed my brother, when you were a young man. For that, I swore to tear your heart out. You dined with me once, twenty years ago. You will not remember. I put my hand upon your shoulder. I had a knife in my other hand. I could have stabbed you to the heart. And there you would have died, Magnus, before my old Marian friends. But I saw that you were a better man than my brother. Something you said. I saw that you were what Rome wanted. [*Pause.*]

[*Fiercely.*] You know better than to call me Cæsar's friend. I've made Cæsar rock in his seat.

POMPEY: You are Cæsar's friend. Your heart beats pulse for pulse with Cæsar's heart. You malign me because my hands are not red from butchery like his. And at this moment, while you malign me, Flaccus is ending the war. Take no more thought of the war. The war is over.

[*The* Generals *draw to one side and talk apart for a moment.*]

POMPEY: Rome is the problem now. You would do well to

think of Rome. This is the seventh democratic rising since my boyhood. Seven desperate attempts to change in fifty years. Does that teach you nothing?

LENT.: Theophanes.

DOMI.: Yes.

THEO.: Magnus.

POMPEY: I offered a broken and distracted Italy. He took it. A turbulent, useless Spain. He took it. I have flung down half a useless world, and he has gorged it and come on into the trap. I am camped in plenty, with six fleets ruling the seas. Cæsar is trenched in mud, living on roots. Besieging me, you call it? He has dug thirty miles of works. He has not enough men to guard ten miles. His men are exhausted and starving. He stays in those works during my pleasure; no longer. He cannot force me to battle. He cannot raid my lines. He cannot go back to Rome.

And I, with one slight thrust, am tumbling him into ruin.

[*Enter an* Orderly *with a despatch. He gives it to* POMPEY]

LENT.: From Flaccus?

DOMI.: You are of the Fifth?

ORDERLY: From Titus Pulcio, my lord.

POMPEY: Very well.

ORDERLY: Have you any orders, my lord?

POMPEY: No orders. Acknowledge.

[*Exit* Orderly, *saluting*]

THEO.: Is it important?

POMPEY: Read it.

THEO.: [*Reading.*] From Titus Pulcio, legate, fifth legion, to Headquarters: "The attack under Valerius Flaccus has been

repulsed with heavy loss. The survivors have fallen back upon the old works, south of the river, where desperate fighting is now going on. I am marching with what I have. The enemy is in force. Stragglers report position hopeless."

DOMI.: These thrusting youths want a lesson. Now, Magnus. Justify your plan, now.

POMPEY: Wait.

LENT.: Wait? While our right flank is being rolled up? [*Coldly.*]

POMPEY: It would take Cæsar two days to bring up enough troops to crush our right.

DOMI.: Surely you will smash this attacking force.

POMPEY: I am fighting with the thought of Rome before me. I will not march back to Rome over corpses, in the Sulla fashion.

DOMI.: At least you will march back over those whom we took last night. I killed those.

POMPEY: You killed those men?

DOMI.: They were rebels, I tell you. Traitors.

POMPEY: I will judge traitors.

DOMI.: They were my own deserters. Dogs. I will serve all traitors so. And I tell you this.

POMPEY: Not a word. You disgrace our cause, Domitius. [*Pause, and change of voice.*] I may win this war. Or this [*showing his gold eagle-clasp*] may pay a camp-trull yonder. But whether I win or go down, my men shall bear themselves nobly. Those on my side must act like knights of the body-guard of God. See to it.

[*Enter* Chief Centurion COTTA, *battered*]

COTTA: I report the death of commander Flaccus, my lord.

POMPEY: Killed?

COTTA: Yes, my lord.

DOMI.: That is what happens in skirmishing. Nothing is done, and the good man gets killed.

COTTA: We were beaten back, my lord; the surprise failed.

POMPEY: Yes? Well?

COTTA: We rushed their wall, tore up their palisades, and set fire to two of the turrets. Then they surrounded us. I should think they had two legions on to us. We had to cut our way home.

POMPEY: And your commander?

COTTA: He was killed in the thick, my lord. After our storm, we were driven back on to the palisades. The pales were all on fire, all along the line, burning hard. I looked one minute, and saw him backed right up against the flames, with a dozen Thracians. They had a whole troop of lancers stabbing at them. I got within a few paces of him, trying to bring him off, but the fire balls burst so thick one couldn't see. My men were being cut to pieces, the cavalry was cutting in on our rear, and there came a rush of spearmen which swept me off the rampart. I saw his body falling back into the fire, all lit up. But we could never get near the place again. They cut us to pieces down on the flat. They killed eight hundred of us.

LENT.: A severe repulse.

DOMI.: Wasted. Wasted lives. Utterly useless, wicked waste.

POMPEY: And then? What happened then?

COTTA: They drove us back into the old works by the river.

Over the outer wall into the ditch. [*Pause.*] We were penned up in the ditch like beasts in a slaughter-house. They swarmed up above us on the wall, pelting us. We were below them, grinding in the mud, huddled like sheep. Men will always huddle when they have no room to use their shields. It was so fierce, that I thought our men would break. But we could not break. We were shut in. We were so pushed together that the dead could not fall. And being pressed man to man gave us a kind of courage. I got up on a heap where the wall had fallen. I wanted to see. I could see all a wave of red plumes where Cæsar's Gauls were pressing up, calling to their horses. Arr. Arr. There was a roar everywhere like ice breaking up in the spring. Behind their main attack they were making a way through the wall for their horse. Every now and then their picks flashed and the earth came scattering down. It was worst at the gate. The noise of the axes on the gate was like a ship-yard. They brought up a tree to batter it, and every time they ran at it, you could see the wood give, in great splinters. I thought we were lost; but it was our fight, my lord.

For I heard fifes, playing "The Day of Zama," and men singing. It was a cohort of the fifth, marching to support our left flank. They came on slowly, in line, with their heads up, and the fifes playing. The centurions led them, singing, marching well ahead. It was a fine thing to see those men coming on. Their ranks were so locked that the oak-trees on their shields made a green breastwork across their front. It was our fight after that. We caught them in the outer ditch. The ditch is choked with them. Cæsar lost a full thousand there in the ditch. They were broken. We shook them to the heart. They will not face us again, my lord, for a long time. Nor any enemy. Cæsar will have trouble with them.

POMPEY: Very well, Cotta.

COTTA: They are sending in the body with a trumpet, my lord.

POMPEY: Yes! Send me the returns of killed and wounded and the centurions' reports. Your legion will stand no watch to-night. See that your men rest. Order wine from the sutlers for them. I will speak to them to-night.

COTTA: Thank you, my lord. [*He goes out, saluting.*]

DOMI.: One moment, Cotta. [*He goes out, after him.*]

THEO.: Cæsar is sending a trumpet. Can he be suing for peace?

LENT.: Why should he sue for peace after a skirmish?

POMPEY: It was the pricking of a bubble. He is suing for peace. And if I grant peace, I shall have these to fight. And if I refuse peace, this ruin will go on.

THEO.: Do we receive this trumpet?

[*Enter* DOMITIUS]

DOMI.: Magnus. Cæsar is in disorder. His men are leaving the trenches. He is withdrawing. His south walls are abandoned already.

POMPEY: Yes. He has learned his lesson.
He must pay them now for the life they have spent for him. He cannot pay them. The most that he can do is to save them from the result of his insanity.

THEO.: He can retreat.

POMPEY: How can he retreat? He cannot retreat. Where can he go? My navies hold the sea. To the north there are savage tribes. The south is blocked by my garrisons. I am here in the west with my army. And to the east lies Metellus, with another army.
He has one chance of saving them. He can sue for peace.

DOMI.: You are not going to receive this herald?

POMPEY: Yes. Rome must have peace.
If Cæsar will make submission——

DOMI. } A surrender will be useless.
THEO. } Cæsar must be destroyed.
LENT. } How will you settle Rome, with Cæsar alive?

POMPEY: This war has gone on all my life. Sulla's method failed. Catiline's method failed. They shall not be tried again. Rome shall be settled this time finally.

DOMI.: If you hesitate to strike now, you are a traitor, Magnus.

POMPEY: I have made my plan.
[*Sternly.*] I will abide by it. To your place. Murmur no more.
No little gust of passion shall set me wavering.

[*A* VOICE *without and a trumpet*]

VOICE: Present arms. Port arms. Pass friend. Present arms.

POMPEY: Life is nothing. It is the way of life which is so much. Enter there.

COTTA: [*Entering*] The body, my lord. With the trumpet.

Enter Bearers *with the body of* VALERIUS FLACCUS. COTTA *and the others salute the corpse. Then, with a solemnity of trumpets blowing points of ceremony,* MARCUS ACILIUS *enters, led by two* Centurions. *He is blindfolded.* COTTA, *the* Bearers *and the* Centurions *go out, when the handkerchief is removed.*

ACIL.: I bring back your soldier, Cneius Pompey.

POMPEY: You bring a message?

ACIL.: I come from Cæsar.

POMPEY: Well?

ACIL.: He asks you to end this war. The gods have given you an equal measure of victory. You have both lost and won half the Roman world. Now that the world is shared between you, you can consent to a peace. To-morrow, if fortune favour one of you, the fortunate one will think himself too great to parley. [*Pause.*] Cæsar asks that a peace may be concluded. If you will undertake to do the same, he will make public oath to disband his army within three days. That is his proposal.

POMPEY: More than a year ago, the Senate ordered Cæsar to disband his troops. That decree still stands disregarded. I cannot treat with a rebel. Cæsar must obey that decree and submit to the Senate's mercy.

ACIL.: The quarrel is between you and Cæsar, Magnus.

POMPEY: Not at all. I represent the Senate.

ACIL.: Your party of the Senate, which my party does not recognise.

POMPEY: These are the facts, Acilius. Cæsar has attacked Republican rule. He has failed. I make it a condition of treaty that he acknowledge Republican authority.

ACIL.: Cæsar has never denied that authority. He is in arms against a perversion of that authority by unscrupulous men. That he seeks to end the Republic is denied by my presence here, asking for peace. Cæsar is no suitor to you. That great mind is its own sufficient authority. Farewell, Magnus. [*Going.*]

[*At door.*] You will grant peace if Cæsar kneels in the dust. Very well. Rome is more to him than honour. He will kneel in the dust. In the most public place in Rome. He will submit himself, body and cause, to the judgment of the Roman people there assembled.

Will that suffice?

POMPEY: No.

The mob has no voice in this matter. The mob must be taught to obey its rulers. Cæsar must submit to the Senate.

Acil.: Then the blood will be on your hands, Magnus. [*Going.*]

Pompey: It will suffice if Cæsar surrender to myself in the presence of both armies. But a public act of submission must be made. Otherwise it will be thought that Cæsar drove us from Italy, and forced us to accept his terms. That I cannot allow.

Acil.: I am to tell Cæsar that you refuse. [*Quietly.*] From fear of what the world may think?

Pompey: You count that a little thing, the thought of the world? For what else are we fighting; but to control the thought of the world? What else matters, Acilius?

You think that I am fighting to be a master? Not so. I am fighting because I know what Cæsar wants. I have watched his career step by step. Cæsar means to be king. He has bribed the rabble to crown him.

You see only the brilliant man, winning—what he has the power to win. I look beyond that man. I see Rome under a secret, bloody domination and a prey to future Cæsars. That shall not be.

I am an old man, now, Acilius. I have been fighting this battle all my life. I hope now to end it. You have heard my terms. [*He strikes a gong.*]

[*A pause. Enter a* Centurion]

Do you accept them or refuse them? Take your time.

[*Pause*]

Acil.: I refuse them.

Pompey: [*To* Centurion.] You will take the Gemella legion, drive in Cæsar's outposts and burn the works.

[*Exit* Centurion]

ACIL.: There is no voice for peace, then. I have failed. Now that my task is done, may I speak with you privately?

POMPEY: Yes. On a private matter. Is your business private?

ACIL.: Yes. It is private.

POMPEY: [*To* Generals.] Leave us.

[*Exit* Generals]

[*To* ACILIUS.] Be brief.

ACIL.: My mother married you. Years ago. She was dragged by force from my father so that you might be propped by a vote the more. She died of a broken heart, in your bed.

You have taken worse props, now. These nobles. They are using you to stamp out democracy. So that they may plunder in peace for another fifty years.

And when you have done their task. When the war is over.

POMPEY: [*Taking up gong.*] I cannot listen to this.

ACIL.: You plan to make just those democratic reforms for which Cæsar is fighting. You mean to cripple the aristocracy. And they will stop you. Domitius hates you. Metellus fears you. Lentulus is jealous of you. They are planning to get rid of you. Even now. [*Pause.*]

Get rid of them, Magnus. Take Cæsar as your friend. End the war. Drive them out.

POMPEY: And after?

ACIL.: You could make Rome what you please.

[POMPEY *strikes the gong*]

[*Re-enter* Generals]

POMPEY: And after? [*Pause.*] Your party shall submit to

mine. [*He writes a few words.*] You may take this to Cæsar. [*Gives writing.*]

Give this man safe conduct.

ACIL.: I am going, Magnus. I shall not see you again.

[THEOPHANES *goes out*]

POMPEY: [*Who has turned away.*] Well?

ACIL.: Pride is a mean thing in the presence of death. To-day you are great, and the kings bring tribute to you. To-morrow you may be this. Only this. Praised by the worm.

[*Showing corpse*]

POMPEY: You talk of the presence of death. Man, I am in the presence of life, and death's a pleasure to it.

[COTTA *and* Centurions *enter with* THEOPHANES. *They salute*]

Who cares what I may be? I may be carrion. But while I am man, and carry a faith in me, I will guard that faith. See this man through the lines.

[*With a solemn blowing of a point of ceremony,* COTTA *and the* Centurions go out, leading ACILIUS, *blindfolded. Murmurs. Acclamations.*

The Generals *eye* POMPEY. *He walks to the body and looks at it.*]

POMPEY: Poor boy. You have gone a long way from this inn. When you were born, women kissed you, and watched you as you slept, and prayed for you, as women do. When you learned to speak, they praised you; they laughed and were so tender with you, even when they were in pain. And to-night you will wander alone, where no woman's love can come to you, and no voice speak to you, and no grief of ours touch you to an answer.

The dead must be very lonely.

DOMI.: [*Coming forward and looking at the body.*] That? Why be sad at that? He was marked for it. [*Quietly.*] Magnus. I

have something to say. I give you full credit for what you have done. You were right. But not so right as I would have been. Destruction's what war's for. Still. It has happened. Now there is Rome. How are you going back to Rome without the moral support of a victory?

LENT.: In Rome, it is said openly that you have been shuffled about at Cæsar's will.

THEO.: And that we have been beaten in every battle.

POMPEY: What is that noise, there?

[*Cries of "Victory." Clapping. Trumpets. A cry of "Present Arms." The spears rattle.*]

[*Enter* LUCIUS LUCCEIUS, *in the civil dress*]

LENT.: Lucceius.

THEO.: Lucius Lucceius.

[LUCCEIUS *stands looking at them silently. He salutes the body, and advances slowly.*]

LUCC.: [*Slowly.*] I salute you, Cneius Pompey. I come from Rome.

POMPEY: What news do you bring from Rome?

LUCC.: News of your triumph, Magnus.
Cæsar's army, under Curio, invaded Africa.
Curio is killed. His army is destroyed. Africa is saved to us.

[*He takes a laurel wreath.*]

The Roman people send me with this wreath, Magnus. [*He offers it, with reverent dignity.*]

POMPEY: [*Taking the wreath and laying it on* FLACCUS' *head.*] Once, long ago, I played with you. By the fish-pools at Capua, watching the gold-fish.

You asked me for my purple, that glittering day long ago. [*He lays his purple over* FLACCUS.] All things for which men

ask are granted. A word may be a star or a spear for all time. This is the day of my triumph, it seems.

[*A distant trumpet winds. It winds again*]

THEO.: There is a horn blowing.

POMPEY: It is blowing like a death-horn.

DOMI.: It is a Roman call.

In Cæsar's camp. [DOMITIUS *flings aside the canvas.*]

It is the "Prepare to March." He is in retreat. His huts are burning. They are winding out upon the road there. They are floundering up the pass. Two thousand horse could ruin them.

POMPEY: Ruin is not my province. Let them destroy themselves. They are wandering out into the wilds without heart, without hope, without plan. That is the forlornest march ever called by trumpets. There is death in every heart already. Well. We shall follow.

Call the chief centurions.

[THEOPHANES *goes to the door, to the* Sentry *without*]

[*Going to the body.*] And to-night we shall be marching from this poor earth, pursuing Cæsar, marching to many trumpets, under the stars, singing as we march. I shall end Sulla's war, now. But we will kill the rebellion, remember, not those Romans.

[*The* Chief Centurions *enter*]

A trumpeter there. Strike camp. Prepare to march. [*A* Centurion *going out, calls.*]

Take up the body.

1ST CENTURION: Man is a sacred city, built of marvellous earth.

2ND CENTURION: Life was lived nobly here to give this body birth.

3RD CENTURION: Something was in this brain and in this eager hand.

4TH CENTURION: Death is so dumb and blind, Death cannot understand. [*They lift the bier.*]
Death drifts the brain with dust and soils the young limbs' glory.
Death makes women a dream and men a traveller's story,
Death drives the lovely soul to wander under the sky,
Death opens unknown doors. It is most grand to die.

[*They go out, followed by* POMPEY]

[*Now without comes a shaking blast from a trumpet. It is taken up and echoed by many trumpets, near and far, blowing the legionary calls, till the air rings.*

CURTAIN

SCENE II

The same. Taper light. Dawn later. POMPEY *writing. Enter* LUCCEIUS

LUCC.: Not in bed, Magnus?

POMPEY: I have had evil dreams.
Are you from Rounds?
Is all quiet?

LUCC.: Yes.
There is a light near Cæsar's camp. They are burning their dead.
Our scouts took two lancers. They say that Cæsar's men are dying. Of fever and hunger.

POMPEY: Yes. He must surrender within a few days. And so they are burning their dead?

LUCC.: Yes.

POMPEY: Now we have Rome to settle. [*Pause.*]
I lie awake, thinking.
What are we, Lucceius?

LUCC.: Who knows? Dust with a tragic purpose. Then an end.

POMPEY: No. But what moves us?
I saw a madman in Egypt. He was eyeless with staring at the sun. He said that ideas come out of the East, like locusts. They settle on the nations and give them life; and then pass on, dying, to the wilds, to end in some scratch on a bone, by a caveman's fire.
I have been thinking that he was wise, perhaps. Some new swarm of ideas has been settling on Rome. A new kind of life is being born. A new spirit. I thought a year ago that it was crying out for the return of kings, and personal rule. I see now that it is only crying out for a tyrant to sweep the old life away.
Rome has changed, Lucceius. Outwardly, she is the same, still. A city which gives prizes to a few great people. A booth where the rabble can sell their souls for bread, and their bodies for the chance of plunder. Inwardly, she is a great democratic power struggling with obsolete laws.
Rome must be settled. The crowd must have more power.

LUCC.: [*Surprised.*] That would be a denial of your whole life, Magnus.
You have been crushing democracy for forty years.

POMPEY: I have crushed rebellions. I mean now to crush their cause.
There must be a change. A great change.

[*Enter* METELLUS, DOMITIUS, LENTULUS]

LUCC.: [*Giving paper.*] This is my report. [*He salutes and goes. At the door he pauses, looking out.*] The pyre is still burning. They must be dying like flies. [*Exit.*]

MET.: [*As the* Generals *sit facing* POMPEY.] Cæsar has sent to me privately, Magnus, to beg me to ask terms from you. I sent back his letter without comment.

The war is over; but we are not yet secure. We shall have to garrison the provinces for some years with men whom we can trust.

Spain and Gaul are arranged for among ourselves. It is the lesser appointments. Magnus, I want your voice, on behalf of Lucius Tuditanus. I was thinking of sending him as my deputy into Asia.

POMPEY: Is that the soldier Tuditanus, who did so well under you? [*To* DOMITIUS.]

DOMI.: No. His nephew.

MET.: He's a young man on my personal staff.

POMPEY: Has he qualified for the prætorship?

MET.: No. Not in the strict legal sense. But he was of the greatest use to me in Asia. He would be competent.

POMPEY: In what way was he of use to you?

MET.: In the collection of tribute, when they disputed our assessments. They hoped to wrangle in Court, without paying, till Cæsar saved them. Tuditanus stopped that. He judged the claims on the spot, and the tax was paid, or distrained, there and then. Often the patrols did not have to unsaddle. And as we needed the money quickly, the system was of great use to me.

POMPEY: Yes. But the law is plain, Metellus. A prætor and a prætor's deputy represent Rome. It is a responsible office. They judge and govern in Rome's name. Men must be trained for it. What has Tuditanus done, besides this tax-collection, that the laws should be broken for him?

LENT.: His father has made many sacrifices for us.

POMPEY: There is a growing belief in Rome that a sacrifice should be a good investment. Anything else?

MET.: He is one of those brilliant young men, of proved loyalty, for whom we ought to provide. I recommend him to you.

POMPEY: That is much in his favour. But I want proof that he can govern. Tell me, Metellus. Where has he shown administrative talent?

MET.: He has not shown it. He is a man whom we ought to bind to us. He would soon learn. We could give him a staff of old soldiers, to steady him, at first.

POMPEY: Has he any power of command? Where has he served?

DOMI.: He was in the horse for a time, in Lycia.

POMPEY: [*To* METELLUS.] What recommended him to you?

MET.: Never mind the merit. I am contending for the principle, that our friends must be rewarded.

POMPEY: Yes. But prætorian power. No. He must qualify.

LENT.: Before you reject him, will you not see him? Metellus and Domitius would not recommend him without grave reason. I might say, without urgent reason.

POMPEY: I want an imperative reason. Without that, it would be a gross act of favouritism. And illegal. As for the results, we have seen such prætors. We should have a rising, and possibly a frontier war. No. Tuditanus cannot be prætor.

MET.: Remember, Magnus. Tuditanus is one of many. Others are in the same position. With a right to expect employment.

POMPEY: Peace will try their quality. There are men with Cæsar with a right to expect employment.

[*The* Generals *look at each other and sigh*]

DOMI.: There is another point. We are going back to Rome. Rome is in a rebellious, unsettled state. We must secure ourselves.

I ask that every man of any standing in Rome be brought to trial, even if he have remained neutral. If the rebels have attacked authority, the neutrals have ignored it. And both must suffer. Rebellion must be stamped out. [*Gives paper.*]

The four hundred men in this list have actively helped the rebellion. There can be no question of trial for them. I ask that they be put to death.

POMPEY: That is out of the question. War will end when Cæsar surrenders. I cannot allow reprisals. I want Rome settled.

LENT.: Perhaps you will explain how you plan to administer Rome. When we return.

MET.: [*Softly.*] There will be an amnesty for offences committed?

POMPEY: Yes.

DOMI.: You will pardon these rebels?

POMPEY: If they submit.

LENT. [*Slowly.*] Will you allow them to help in the reconstruction?

POMPEY: [*Hotly.*] Yes. Power is in too few hands. There must be a change in Rome. I would have these four hundred firebrands made Senators, to help us make the change wisely.

MET.: So.

DOMI.: Magnus. There is only one way of settling Rome. By showing her who is master in a way which she'll remember.

LENT.: Any dallying with these rebels will leave us where we were before. Hated, and flouted by the rabble, and in danger from it. Losing our privileges, one by one. Losing our possessions and our power. Magnus, I would ask you to weigh this proposal very carefully. It affects the future of the patrician idea.

POMPEY: And of Rome. What kind of future do you expect from a massacre like this? I will tell you what you will get. You will drive these four hundred firebrands into the Provinces, where it will take five years of war to crush them.

No. I'll go back with peace. Not a man shall be touched.

LENT.: Before we go back with peace, we must end the war. I have had letters from Rome.

Popular voice in Rome says that we have feared to risk a battle. That the war drags on, when it could be ended in a day.

That we dare not kill these representatives of the people.

That is a dangerous spirit in a city which we are about to rule. That spirit can only be broken by decisive success. We must go back with victory. A battle is certain victory to ourselves. We ask you to give battle.

MET.: We have asked this before, without success. We ask it now, feeling it to be a grave need. Lentulus has mentioned it as a political expedient. I add to that this, that our treasury is nearly empty. We have no means of raising more money. We have drained Spain and Asia for years to come. And your inactive plan of campaign has killed our credit. We must fight. We cannot afford to keep the field for another month.

POMPEY: Cæsar cannot keep the field for another week.

DOMI.: Cæsar will drag on, day by day, till the corn is ripe. It is not many days now to harvest. You let his men get a full

provision and you will see how long they will keep the field. I could break that impostor's strength with the horse alone.

POMPEY: I can break his strength without risking a life. I will not give battle. Be thankful that we can end such a war with so little bloodshed. [*The* Generals *rise.*]

DOMI.: You are the oldest, Lentulus.

LENT.: It may lose us votes, remember. You are the most popular.

MET.: Perhaps I should do it. I am related.

POMPEY: What do you wish to say?

MET.: Magnus. I have to speak to you.
You love power too well.
Your command ends with the war.
You have tried to prolong your command by neglecting to end the war.
But the war is over.
You plan now to retain command while you impose your will upon the State. That is a menace to the Republic. We have been forced to convoke the Senate to discuss it.
The Senate has sanctioned the appointment of Tuditanus, and the list of the proscribed. It also commands that you give battle to Cæsar. [*He gives a paper.*]

[POMPEY *walks up stage slowly, then down. He stands at table, fronting them.*]

POMPEY: What do you expect me to say, Conscript Fathers? That I refuse to obey this order?
I could refuse.
If I were Cæsar, or Lentulus. Or you, Domitius, or Metellus. I should refuse.
And my soldiers, or Cæsar's there, would work my will on a Senate which had so insulted me.

But I am Pompey the Great. I am bound by my military oath.

Do not think to humble me. Death is a little thing to the loss of conscience.

Death is easier than life to me.

But even if I die, Rome will be a prey to unscrupulous men.

There is no hope for Rome. She ends here. Disaster begins.

But for me, you would now be beggars at Cæsar's doors. I saved Rome from Cæsar.

And now Rome is to beg her life from you. You have used Pompey the Great to ruin her.

But you have first to fight for her.

You shall give your sin a dignity, by risking your lives for it. [*He strikes the gong.*]

[*Enter an* Aide]

[*To* Aide.] Give the signal for battle. [*Exit* Aide.]

You have your will, now.

This is the end.

And at the end, think what it is which you destroy.

Rome is nothing to you. Only the reward of greed, and hate, and pride.

The city where justice was born.

Look beyond your passions, at what Rome is. It is the state of Rome, not passion, which concerns us now.

A little while ago she was a market-town, governed by farmers. Now she rules Europe.

And in herself no change. Cramped still. Fettered. The same laws. The same rulers. Like iron on her heart.

And forty years of civil war. All my life. A blind turbulent heaving towards freedom.

[*Without, a confused noise as of many men stirring from sleep. Shouted orders are clearly heard above the murmur.*]

THE ORDERS

Fall in. Dress. Cohort. By the right. Cohort, to the left,

wheel. Eyes left. Cohort. Fifers, three paces to the—— Attention, etc., etc., Cohort. Salute, etc.

[*In a moment's silence a trumpet blows outside the tent. Cheering.*]

POMPEY: Five minutes ago I had Rome's future in my hand. She was wax to my seal. I was going to free her.

Now is the time to free her. You can tear the scales and the chains from her. You can make her a State so splendid that Athens would be a dust-heap to her.

You will not.

You will drive her back three centuries, so that you may wreak your passions on her.

Go on, then. Destroy her. Or be destroyed.

Whether you win or lose, Rome ends.

[*A pause. Orders without*]

ORDERS: The cohorts will advance in——Cohort, halt. Ground arms. Attention. Form four deep. Attention. By the right. Quick march. Cohort. Cohort. To the left. Turn.

DOMI.: What orders have you?

[*For the next minute or two a noise of troops moving*]

POMPEY: You have fought this battle many times in your hearts. [*He flings the doors wide, showing a bright dawn.*] Now you will fight it in earnest. You will fight the wild beasts whom I could have starved like beasts.

Go to your divisions.

[*The* Generals *go out silently.* POMPEY *stands by the table*]

ORDERS: Cohort. Halt. Ground arms. Attention. Form four deep. Cohort. Left turn.

[*Enter* PHILIP. POMPEY *does not look at him. Fifes of a cohort pass*]

PHILIP: Do you want me, my lord?

POMPEY: [*Turning.*] Can you sing, Philip?

PHILIP: Sing, my lord?

POMPEY: Yes.

PHILIP: I don't know, my lord.

POMPEY: What was that song we had? That night. In the Asian wars. When we broke Mithridates?

PHILIP: [*Hesitating.*] I don't know whether I can, my lord.

POMPEY: Sing.

PHILIP: I'll try, my lord. [*He repeats.*]
Though we are ringed with spears, though the last hope is gone,
Romans stand firm, the Roman dead look on.
Before our sparks of life blow back to him who gave,
Burn clear, brave hearts, and light our pathway to the grave.

POMPEY: Take my purple, Philip. [*He flings his purple aside.*]

A CENTURION: Eyes left. Salute.

A COHORT PASSING: Hail! Pompey. Imperator. [*Trumpets.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

The Poop of a Lesbian Merchantman of the First Century B. C.
On each side, the bulwark of a ship, painted green. There are gaps, or gangways, in these bulwarks, so that people may go down the ship's side into boats.
At back of stage, the poop-rail, also painted green. A wooden belfry with a bell stands upon the middle of the poop-rail.
On each side of the bell is a ladder leading down to the main deck.

Gaps in the poop-rail allow people to reach the poop by these ladders.

Above the deck, sloping from amidships like a tent, is an awning of blue and white baftas. This awning has a flap, which falls at back of stage, hiding the poop from the main deck. On both sides of the stage the awning is secured by stops to guys above the ship's bulwarks.

In the centre of the stage (if the theatre stage is so built) is a hatchway, surrounded by a raised white rim or coaming. This leads down to the cabins.

Behind it is a mast (painted "mast colour") which rises up through the awning.

Round the mast is a square of timbers, like a stout fence. These are the bitts, to which the running rigging is belayed.

Stout ropes and blocks lead along the mast.

Attendants, Sailors, *etc., etc., keep always to the starboard side, out of respect to* Pompey, *who uses the weather, or honourable side.*

At the rising of the curtain Captain *is standing by poop-rail, looking at the men at work forward. The* Boy *holds up the awning so that he can see under it.*]

The Chantyman: [*Heard off, amid a click of pawls.*] Old Pompey lost Pharsalia fight.

The Sailors: [*Heaving at the forward capstan.*] Mark well what I do say.

The Chanty: Old Pompey lost Pharsalia fight.

The Sailors: And Cæsar now is the world's delight.
And I'll go no more a-roving,
With Pompey the Great.
A-roving. A-roving.
Since roving's been my ru-i-n,
I'll go no more a-roving
With Pompey the Great.

THE MATE: [*From far forward.*] Avast heaving. Walk back. [*Pause.*] Unship your bars.

THE CAPTAIN: That'll do, boy. [Boy *drops awning.*] Now we're riding to a single anchor.

THE BOY: Yes, sir.

THE CAPT.: [*Kindly.*] D' you know what little port that is yonder?

THE BOY: No, sir.

THE CAPT.: That's Pelusium, in Egypt. This is the Nile.

THE BOY: Is this where the King of Egypt lives, sir?

THE CAPT.: [*Pointing.*] Over yonder. Where all those soldiers are. That's where the King of Egypt is. Young King Ptolemy, who Pompey sent the letter to, after Cæsar beat him.

THE BOY: Why does Pompey come to him, sir? He's only a boy.

THE CAPT.: It was through Pompey he became king. And there are lots of Pompey's old soldiers yonder. An army of them.

THE BOY: What a lot of ships, sir.

THE CAPT.: [*Anxiously.*] Ye-es. A lot of ships.

THE BOY: They must be men of war, sir. There's a bugle. Oh, look, sir, at those big galleys. Hark at the bugles. [*Bugle-calls off.*] Is that to call the slaves, sir?

THE CAPT.: [*Looking under the sharp of his hand.*] Is that a boat putting off from the flagship? That big galley nearest to us?

THE BOY: Yes, sir. Don't they pull well, sir? They're coming to us.

THE CAPT.: Quick. Get the red side-ropes rove.

[*The* Boy *reeves side-ropes, which he takes from locker by the gangway.*]

THE BOY: [*At his work.*] They're hailing us, sir.

A CRY: Ship ahoy! Ahoy, you!

THE CAPT.: Hulloh!

A CRY: What ship is that?

THE CAPT.: The *Fortune.* From Cyprus.

A CRY: Have you Lord Pompey aboard you?

THE CAPT.: Yes. Lord Pompey's aboard us. Down below. [*Pause.*]

THE BOY: They seem to be talking together, sir.

A CRY: When did you leave Cyprus?

THE CAPT.: [*Humbly.*] At noon, sir, yesterday. [*A pause.*]

A CRY: D'ye hear there? You're not to send any boat ashore.

THE CAPT.: Ay, ay, my lord.

THE BOY: They're pulling back to the ship, sir.

THE CAPT.: [*Testily.*] Quick. Dip our streamer. Dip our streamer, boy. Don't you know enough for that? [*The* Boy *runs aft and dips the streamer.*] Again. Now. Once more. Here. [*He beckons.*] Go below quietly, and see if Lord Pompey's stirring. [*The* Boy *goes down the hatch. The* Captain *walks up and down, uneasily looking at the distant ships.*] No. No. I don't like it. [*He shakes his head.*] I wish we were out of it. [*Re-enter* Boy.] Well, lad?

THE BOY: Yes, sir. Lord Pompey's up, sir.

THE CAPT.: Ah. [*Kindly.*] You'll be able to tell them, when you get home, that you were shipmates with Pompey the Great.

THE BOY: Yes, sir.

THE CAPT.: That's what comes of being a sailor.

THE BOY: Please, sir.

THE CAPT.: Yes, boy.

THE BOY: What is the name of that mountain, sir?

THE CAPT.: That? That's Mount Cassius. There's a tale about that mountain. Something about a king. Or some one to die there. I forget. Here. What are they doing aboard those galleys?

THE BOY: They are filling full of soldiers. Soldiers are putting off to them in boats.

THE CAPT.: [*Striking the bell once.*] Mr. Mate, there!

THE MATE: [*Below, out of sight.*] Sir.

[*Enter* MATE]

THE CAPT.: Oh, Mr. Mate. Here, boy. What are you listening at? Go forward. And if you want to see your mother again, you pray. Pray that King Ptolemy'll let you.

[*Exit* Boy]

[*The* Captain *speaks intently to the* Mate.] Look here. We're done. Pompey isn't wanted here. Those eunuchs have put the King against him. See those galleys? They're getting ready to sink us. If you see one of them getting under way, cut the cable. Don't wait for orders. Cut the cable, and hoist sail.

THE MATE: I'll make all ready, sir.

THE CAPT.: It makes your blood boil, though. A week back they'd have crawled all round Pompey for a chance to kiss his footman's boots. Now they're going to drive him out.

THE MATE: Well, sir. You can't expect gratitude from a king, they say. The world's wide. There's other lands besides Egypt. Egypt's got trouble enough, without Pompey. What did he come here for? That's what I don't see.

THE CAPT.: He's had a misfortune. One doesn't know where to turn when one's had a misfortune. And having a wife and that. Very likely he's beside himself, for all he doesn't take on.

THE MATE: He'd ought to have come with his fleet. That would have frightened them. Coming alone like this makes people think he's a beggar. D' you think they'll ram us?

THE CAPT.: I don't trust them.

THE MATE: The hands don't trust them, neither.

THE CAPT.: Ah! the growlers. What do they say?

THE MATE: They're saying they didn't sign on to be rammed.

THE CAPT.: They signed for what I choose.

THE MATE: Yes, sir. They're afraid of the soldiers and that.

THE CAPT.: They got sense. If I were Pompey, I'd run for it. A man with a wife like that didn't ought to seek trouble. Well. God send pay-day! Watch the hands and stand by. That's your job.

THE MATE: I'll make all clear, sir. Bosun, there!

BOSUN: [*Off.*] Sir?

THE MATE: Overhaul your gear. Have all ready for getting under way.

BOSUN: Have all ready, sir. I will, sir. [*Whistle.*]

THE MATE: [*Going.*] There's his steward, sir. [*Exit*]

THE CAPT.: Steward.

PHILIP: [*Entering.*] Sir.

THE CAPT.: Oh! steward. [PHILIP *approaches.*] Look here, steward. What's Pompey's object in coming here?

PHILIP: He's come to see the King.

THE CAPT.: Is he come to ask for shelter?

PHILIP: He's come to raise another army out of all his old soldiers here.

THE CAPT.: He won't get any soldiers here. They're all at the wars. The young King's fighting his sister.

PHILIP: That will be patched up. The young King thinks the world of my master. He'll do what Pompey wants.

THE CAPT.: He hasn't answered Pompey's letter yet.

PHILIP: No?

THE CAPT.: We've been told not to send a boat ashore.

PHILIP: Well, all I know is, the young King longs to honour Pompey. But for Pompey the old King would have died a poor flute-player in Ephesus. You can see for yourself he's coming. There's his state barge at the jetty. Look. They're out on the roofs. There's music.

[*Enter* POMPEY]

THE CAPT.: [*Unconvinced.*] It may be as you say, steward. Ah. [*He starts, salutes, and hastily crosses to the starboard, or lee side.*]

PHILIP: My lord. Do you know what day it is, my lord?

POMPEY: What day is it?

PHILIP: The day of your triumph, my lord. Your Asian triumph. Thirteen years ago.

POMPEY: Is it so long ago? That was a great day.

PHILIP: Yes, indeed, my lord, I'll never forget that day. We always like to keep it up with a little something among ourselves. We brought you a few figs, my lord. They're only Cretans. [*He offers figs.*] Just in honour of the day, my lord. If you would accept of them.

POMPEY: [*Taking and tasting.*] Thank you, Philip. [*To the* Captain.] This old servant of mine is always bent on spoiling me.

THE CAPT.: Yes, my lord. So I see.

PHILIP: [*Going.*] I'm sure I hope to-day will be a great day too, my lord.

[*Exit* PHILIP]

POMPEY: It should be, Philip. [*He lays figs on weather fife-rail.*] Captain!

THE CAPT.: Yes, my lord.

POMPEY: Has any one come aboard for me?

THE CAPT.: No, my lord.

POMPEY: Thank you.

THE CAPT.: Beg pardon, my lord.

POMPEY: Well?

THE CAPT.: The flagship has ordered us not to send a boat ashore. I thought I ought to report it, my lord.

POMPEY: Thank you, Captain. A fine fleet here.

THE CAPT.: [*Meaningly.*] They seem to be getting their crews aboard.

POMPEY: What speed have those galleys?

THE CAPT.: Those there, my lord. They might make seventeen. That's with good rowers. And dead calm. And the ships new out of dock. In a wind like this, they wouldn't make more'n about eight. They can't work their oars in a sea-way. [*Pause.*] Now's the time, my lord, if you think of putting to sea. By and by, may be, they'll be able to stop us.

POMPEY: Thank you, Captain.

THE CAPT.: I'll report any boat, my lord.

[*Exit.*]

[*Enter* CORNELIA]

CORN.: Has the King sent?

POMPEY: No.

CORN.: No answer?

POMPEY: Not yet.

CORN.: Can he know we are here?

POMPEY: Yes. He will come. He will come in person.

CORN.: Why has he not come already?

POMPEY: It is early.

CORN.: Do you think it is safe to wait? It is ominous. This silence. And all those ships. And the people crowding on the roofs. What if the King be against us?

POMPEY: He cannot be. Do not be afraid.

[*Enter* THEOPHANES]

THEO.: Magnus. They have sent an order. We are not to send a boat ashore. They are plotting something.

POMPEY: If they were plotting, they would ask us to come ashore.

CORN.: But why should we not send a boat, if they are friendly?

POMPEY: The King will be coming in person. Then there was plague in Cyprus. We have not got a clean bill.

CORN.: But to be ordered.

THEO.: The Admiral should have come.

POMPEY: This is a merchantman. We are not under Roman colours.

CORN.: The Captain there is anxious. Look at him.

THEO.: Ask him.

POMPEY: It is necessary for the world that I see King Ptolemy

[*The* Captain *flings down the halliard coil and goes below.*]

Strange. Is there any Cassius with Ptolemy?

CORN.: Lucius Cassius is dead, surely.

THEO. There's Quintus Cassius. But he is in Spain.

CORN. Is there not Cneius Cassius? He was legate in one of Cæsar's legions?

POMPEY: Cneius? I thought he was killed?

THEO.: I could find out. Sextus would know.

POMPEY: No. Do not wake him. It is absurd.

CORN.: Why do you ask?

POMPEY: When I was in Africa, at the time, an old woman bade me beware of Cassius. I have not thought of it for thirty-four years. An old black hag. Sitting in the sun, there. By the ruins of Carthage. Geminius was riding with me. She hobbled up on a crutch and plucked at my rein. "Young

captain. You beware of Cassius. You that ride so proud, beware of Cassius. The sand is falling."

CORN.: Why should you think of that now?

POMPEY: Because I am going to victory, as I was then. [*The* Hands *come aft.*]

THE MATE: [*Following.*] Get down off the poop. If you want anything, send a man aft.

1ST HAND: Begging your pardon, your honour. We want to speak.

2ND HAND: We mean to speak.

3RD HAND: We want to know why we're brought here.

4TH HAND: And how long we're to stay here.

2ND HAND: He's been beaten.

4TH HAND: He's got no friends. Our lives are as good to us as his is.

THE MATE: Down off the poop! Down with you! Bosun, there! [*Struggling.*]

POMPEY: What is the matter? [*Struggling ends. Pause.*]

1ST HAND: Begging your pardon, your honour. We wanted to see the Captain.

POMPEY: [*To the* Mate.] What is their grievance?

THE MATE: Some more of their fancies, my lord. [*To the* Hands.] Get over to leeward.

POMPEY: They seem a good lot. What is it?

THE MATE: Oh, the Captain'll soon settle it, my lord. [*To the* Hands.] You wait.

[*Exit by hatch to find* Captain. *Pause.* POMPEY *takes a half turn, and then speaks.*]

POMPEY: [*To* Hands.] Of what do you complain?

1ST HAND: Begging your pardon, your honour. We'd rather wait for the Captain.

POMPEY: What is wrong, though? Tell me.

1ST HAND: I'd rather not say, my lord.

POMPEY: [*Takes a half turn, and speaks again.*] Come. What is the trouble? Is it the food? Or the drink?

1ST HAND: Begging your pardon, your honour. We don't like the look of things.

POMPEY: What things?

1ST HAND: Begging your honour's pardon, the ships there.

2ND HAND: They're getting ready to sink us.

POMPEY: Why do you think that?

3RD HAND: You can see the soldiers going aboard them, can't you?

1ST HAND: [*To* 3RD.] Here now. Here.

3RD HAND: [*To* 1ST.] What's wrong? It's the truth. Isn't it?

POMPEY: So they are going aboard to sink us? Why should they sink us?

3RD HAND: Because you're aboard us. [*He stands out.*] You're not wanted here. You're no good to Ptolemy. Cæsar's the man, now, not you. You're no more than what we are. [*To the* Hands.] And we're to be drowned, are we, because his mightiness that was is worth more dead than alive? He's down. He's no one. He's had fellows die for him for forty years. It's time he learned what it feels like himself.

4TH HAND: That's what I say.

3RD HAND: Come on!

2ND HAND: Man the halliards.

3RD HAND: We'll carry you to Cæsar. And sell you.

POMPEY: Stand back!
You say that the soldiers are coming to sink us?
There are five thousand troops there, and fifty ships.
Are they all coming to sink us?
It seems a large force to sink one ship, manned by such a company.

3RD HAND: Here. Look here!

1ST HAND: [*To* 3RD.] You'll get us hanged.

2ND HAND: Give him sheet.

4TH HAND: How about us? That's what I say.

POMPEY: If I am still so terrible, I must save you. I will go to the flagship yonder. Man your boat.

3RD HAND: You will go to the flagship?

1ST HAND: [*Alarmed.*] Look at her. There.

4TH HAND: Look.

2ND HAND: Look at her. She's got her oars out.

1ST HAND: She's coming. We're gone up.

3RD HAND: Then he'll go first.

1ST HAND: [*Holding him.*] No, you don't.

[*Enter* Captain]

THE CAPT.: She's coming, my lord. Shall I cut? We might do it, even now.

POMPEY: She is not coming. And if she were, what is death?

THE CAPT.: Hard times for the widow, my lord.

POMPEY: [*To the men.*] Leave the ropes.
Do you think the soul can be quenched with water? Or cut with swords? Or burned?

3RD HAND: I know my body can, my lord.

POMPEY: You do well to fear death. Go to your place.
[*Musingly.*] If death can crush what comprehends heaven? Why! We are in a bad way, Captain.

[*The* Hands *file off, quietly.* POMPEY *looks down on the main deck. The* Captain *stands apart anxiously watching the flagship.* CORNELIA *and* THEOPHANES *eye each other.*]

CORN.: Is the flagship coming?

THEO.: She is ready to come.

CORN.: To sink us?

THEO.: She could sink us.

CORN.: I cannot bear this.

[POMPEY *turning, walks towards them*]

THEO.: We ought to have gone to our fleet. We're helpless like this.

CORN.: Magnus. This isn't what we planned.

POMPEY: Let me reassure you. Egypt is friendly to me.
I saved her independence. I made the elder Ptolemy King. The young King is my ward, bound to me by intimate ties. Those troops are veterans of my Asian Army.

THEO.: The young King's at his wits' end with civil war. How can he begin a war with Cæsar?

POMPEY: Cæsar will begin a war with him whether he takes me or rejects me. Cæsar wants Egypt, as Ptolemy very well knows.

CORN.: [*Bitterly.*] And we are suppliants to him. We Romans. To whom they should strike their flags. [*After a pause, quickly.*] See if they refuse to salute us.

THEO.: We should know what to expect then.

CORN.: Oh, let us be certain. Hoist your colours.

POMPEY: It is not time yet. I will hoist them when the watch ends.

[*The* Captain *strikes the bell once*]

THE CAPT.: One bell, my lord.

POMPEY: The watch is nearly out?

THE CAPT.: Nearly, my lord. Will you hoist any colours, my lord?

POMPEY: My consular colours.

THE CAPT.: I'm only a merchantman, my lord. If they should refuse to salute, my lord?

POMPEY: You will go alongside the flagship there, and order her to salute.

THE CAPT.: [*Going.*] I am all ready to get under way, my lord. Bosun, there! Stand by. Mr. Mate. Boy, there!

[*He goes to the break of the poop and looks down on main deck*]

Are your colours bent on, Centurion?

CENTURION: [*Off.*] Tell him, yes.

BOY: [*Off.*] All ready to hoist, sir.

THE CAPT.: [*Coming to* POMPEY.] All ready, my lord. Will you make eight bells, my lord?

POMPEY: When it is time. [*He paces leisurely.*]

[*To* THEO]

Have you your tables?

THEO.: Yes.

POMPEY: I shall want you to take notes.

[*To* CORNELIA]

What was that passage about the soul? We were reading it that day at Alba, when the women brought you their first-fruits? Our first year. We were in the garden. You were reading to me. There was a verse about the soul.

CORN.: The upright soul is safe?

POMPEY: Yes. That was the verse. I have always loved Alba. I was there as a child. We were happy there, that year.

CORN.: Very happy. And that day. The doves came, picking the spilled grain. And at night there was a moon.

POMPEY: All the quiet valley. And the owls were calling. Those little grey owls. Make eight bells, Captain.

[*The* Captain *makes it. The* Bosun *pipes the colours up*]

THE CAPT.: Not so fast there, boy.

[*Eight bells is echoed over the harbour from ship to ship.* POMPEY *and* THEOPHANES *raise their right hands. Perhaps* CORNELIA *ought to veil*]

THEO.: The flagship is hoisting her ensign. [*Bugles off.*]

CORN.: Will she salute? Will she salute? There.

THEO.: There. She dips it.

CORN.: They all salute.

THEO.: Then we are safe.

POMPEY: That is settled, then. I am to be received. The King expects me.

THE CAPT.: I beg pardon, my lord. I think his Majesty the King is coming off to fetch you. The barge is putting off, my

lord. [*Approaching.*] No, my lord; it is not the King, it is one of the pearl-boats, my lord, which work the pearl-beds here.

POMPEY: Something of the kind. What do you make of her?

THE CAPT.: They pull very badly, my lord. They pull like soldiers.

POMPEY: They are soldiers. I see the gleam of armour.

THEO.: Seven soldiers.

THE CAPT.: Am I to let them alongside, my lord?

POMPEY: Wait.

THEO.: Has he sent a boat like that for you?

CORN.: You cannot go in that old boat.

THEO.: Magnus. There is some treachery.

CORN.: Cneius. It is a dreadful risk. To stay.

POMPEY: It is necessary. I must carry this thing through. You would rather I ran the risk than let the world become—what it will become.

CORN.: Much rather.

POMPEY: You will understand, then.

THE CAPT.: They are hailing, my lord. Would the lady go below a little? They might fling a dart on board.

CORN.: The air is fresher here.

SEPT.: [*Off.*] Hail! Pompey. Imperator.

THE CAPT.: We could still run for it, my lord.

POMPEY: We must not show that we mistrust them.

SEPT.: [*Off.*] Hail, Pompey, Imperator!

POMPEY: Have your men ready to salute.

SEPT.: [*Off.*] In bow.

CORN.: Cneius. Cneius.

POMPEY: There is no danger. Have you the little book with my speech to Ptolemy?

CORN.: Here it is.

SEPT.: [*Off.*] Toss your starboard oars. Way enough.

POMPEY: Company there. Salute.

THE CAPT.: The call, there.

[*Enter* SEPTIMIUS, *a Roman military tribune, with* ACHILLAS EGYPTIAN, *both in military dress. The* Bosun *pipes the side for each of them.*]

POMPEY: [*Advancing.*] You come from King Ptolemy? [SEPTIMIUS *salutes*, ACHILLAS *bows.*]

ACHIL.: From King Ptolemy. He sends you royal greeting.

POMPEY: He wishes to see me?

ACHIL.: He wish to see you. To be your friend.

POMPEY: Shall I bring the ship alongside the quay there?

ACHIL.: There is much mud and sandbanks. There would be no water for this galley. You have to take a boat.

POMPEY: [*Glancing at ships.*] Your fleet is getting under way here?

ACHIL.: [*Shrugging his shoulders.*] Ah! Will you come into my boat?

POMPEY: She is not a very handsome boat.

ACHIL.: No? It is bad weather sometimes.

POMPEY: [*To* SEPTIMIUS.] I think I should know you, my friend. You and I have served together? [SEPTIMIUS *nods, but does not answer.*]

Where was it? I know your face. [*No answer.*]

A long time ago. Eighteen years ago. In the war against the pirates? [*Pause.*] Was it not? [*No answer.*]

You commanded a company in my guard. [*Pause.*] You did something? You burnt a ship one night? You paddled out alone and set fire to her? I remember you. I gave you a sword. You are wearing it now.

SEPT.: [*Turning to the boat, muttering to himself.*] I'm as good a man as you are.

ACHIL.: You come in my little boat. I take you to the King. The King is your friend. Lovely lady, the King want to see him.

CORN.: Yes.

POMPEY: I will follow you. Go down into the boat.

[ACHILLAS, *bowing, goes to gangway, where he stands, looking aft.*]

POMPEY: Now.

THEO.: Magnus. You mustn't go.

CORN.: Cneius. Cneius. What do they mean?

THEO.: You mustn't go, Magnus.

POMPEY: My beloved! You must stay here. You must not come.

CORN.: My darling! What are they going to do?

POMPEY: What God wills.

Theophanes. If this is the end, I wish it to be the end. Those arrangements of the fleet. Cancel them. You understand. Go to Cato. Tell Cato to submit to Cæsar. War will

only mean more bloodshed. He cannot stand against Cæsar. I could have.

Scipio's daughter. Make your father submit to Cæsar. Keep my sons out of it. Tell them. End the war. Life is very grand but there is something behind it. Something which strikes a mean. I had my hand on it. Come. Courage. These are Egyptians. [*To* CORNELIA.]

Captain. You must sail. Stand by.

What else is there? Asia. Theophanes. Asia must submit. Send to the Kings. The world must make what terms it can. This is all in the event. If this is the end. You understand? If not, you know my orders.

Philip. Scythes. Cotta. Go down into the boat.

PHILIP: My lord. I've served you a long time, my lord.

POMPEY: What is it, Philip? [COTTA *and* SCYTHES *go.*]

PHILIP: My lord. My old, beloved lord.

POMPEY: Why, Philip. We are the only ones left. We are two old Sulla's men. Have you my cloak in the boat?

PHILIP: Forty years, my lord.

POMPEY: The broidered one. [*To* CORNELIA.] Your gift. Come. Carry it down, man.

PHILIP: I wish it was to begin all over again.

[*Exit*]

ACHIL.: Will you come into the boat? The King is waiting.

CORN.: Cneius. My husband. My husband.

POMPEY: God only lends us.

If the King keep faith. We shall have time. Time for what we must imagine. If not. We know our love. The gods treasure you. [*He goes towards gangway.*]

Remember, Captain.

Theophanes. If I fail, you must warn Lentulus.

[*He goes to gangway. The* Bosun *starts to pipe the side.* Pompey *turns to the* Boy. Bosun *stops his pipe.* Pompey *takes figs from fife-rail and gives them to the* Boy.]

Can you eat figs? [*The* Boy *mumbles.*]
What is your name? [*The* Boy *bursts into tears.*]

Achil.: [*At gangway.*] Give me your hand. I take your hand down.

Pompey: [*Pausing in the gangway and looking back. Sadly. To* Theophanes.]

"Into a tyrant's court the truly brave
Goes proudly, though he go to die a slave."

[*He goes down. The* Bosun *pipes the side*]

Sept. [*Coldly.*] Back your port oars. Shove off. Give way together.

The Capt.: [*Softly to* Mate.] Go on there. Man your halliards.

The Mate: Take the turns off. Stretch it along. Softly now. Stand by.

[*The* Seamen *coming behind* Cornelia, *man the halliards. The* Chantyman *stands on the bitts. All look after the boat.*]

The Chanty: There's a lot of troops ashore.

The Mate: S's't.

Corn.: They are not talking to him.

Theo.: He is reading his speech. [*Pause.*] He organises everything. Cæsar improvises.

Corn.: There they go out of the sun.

THEO.: The hill casts a long shadow.

CORN.: What is the name of the hill?

THE CAPT.: Mount Cassius, lady.

THEO.: [*Quickly.*] They are coming with banners. Look.

CORN.: He is safe.

THEO.: There comes the King. Hark! Trumpets. They're saluting. He is standing up to land.

CORN.: Ah! Swords. He is stabbed.

THEO.: Ah! you gods. You gods!

CORN.: Oh! He is killed! He is killed! He is killed! [*She collapses.*]

THEO.: [*Covering his eyes.*] The devils! The devils!

THE MATE: They stabbed him in the back.

ANTISTIA: It's ebb-tide now, my beauty.

THE CAPT.: [*Yelling.*] Cut the cable. [*Chopping forward.*]

A VOICE: All gone, the cable.

THE MATE: Let fall.

A VOICE: All gone.

THE MATE: Sheet home. Hoist away.

THE MEN: Ho. [*They haul.*]

THE CHANTY: Away ho! [*The* Men *haul.*]

[*He intones in a clear loud voice. The* Seamen *sing the chorus, hauling.*]

[*This song is sung like an ordinary halliard chanty. The chorus is to the tune of the old chanty of "Hanging Johnny." The solo will be intoned clearly, without tune. It goes to fast time,*

the chorus starting almost before the soloist ends his line. The Men *must haul twice, in the proper manner, in each chorus. The hauling will have for natural accompaniments the whine of the three-sheaved block, the grunt of the parrels and the slat from the great sail.*]

THE CHANTY: Kneel to the beautiful women who bear us this strange brave fruit.

THE MEN: Away, i-oh.

THE CHANTY: Man with his soul so noble: man half god and half brute.

THE MEN: So away, i-oh.

THE CHANTY: Women bear him in pain that he may bring them tears.

CHORUS

THE CHANTY: He is a king on earth, he rules for a term of years.

CHORUS

THE CHANTY: And the conqueror's prize is dust and lost endeavour.

CHORUS

THE CHANTY: And the beaten man becomes a story for ever.

CHORUS

THE CHANTY: For the gods employ strange means to bring their will to be.

CHORUS

THE CHANTY: We are in the wise gods' hands and more we cannot see.

CHORUS

So away, i-oh.

A VOICE: High enough.

THE MATE: Lie to. [*The* Seamen *lay to the fall.*] Make fast. Coil up.

A VOICE: All clear to seaward.

THE CAPT.: Pipe down. [*The* Bosun *pipes the belay.*]

CURTAIN

EPILOGUE SPOKEN BY COTTA

Pompey was a great Captain, riding among Kings, a King,
Now he lies dead on the sand, an old blind tumbled thing
Fate has her secret way to humble captains thus
Fate comes to every one and takes the light from us
And the beginning and the end are darkened waters where no lights be
But after many days the brook finds ocean
And the ship puts to sea.

NOTES

ON THE APPEARANCE OF POMPEY

PORTRAITS exist of Cneius Pompeius Magnus. The most important of these is a marble bust at Copenhagen. Several likenesses are to be found on the gold and silver coins struck by his son, Sextus, in Spain. Plutarch says of him that, "being come to man's state, there appeared in his gesture and behavior a grave and princely majesty. His hair also stood a little upright, and the cast and soft moving of his eyes had a certain resemblance (as they said) of the statues and images of Alexander the Great." This resemblance may still be traced.

At the time of his murder he was fifty-eight years old, a powerful, very active man, in the prime of life. His bust, evidently done towards the end of his life, shows that his hair, which was thick, coarse, and worn rather long, still tended to stand a little upright. The head is of great breadth at the eyes. The brow is low and lined with three deep lines of wrinkles

going right across it in irregular M shape. The eyebrows are well marked: the supra-orbital ridge is heavy. The nose is full and strong, with the broad base which is so good an index of intellectual power. The septum is of great breadth. The mouth is of that kindly tightness which one sees in the portraits of some of our Admirals. Below the mouth is a deep horizontal dent. The chin is not cloven. The face is lined a good deal. A deep straight wrinkle runs from each side of the nose to the puckered angles of the mouth. The eyes are crowsfooted. There are no indications as to the colour of the hair and eyes. The shape of the head suggests the brown or fair type of man. At the time of his death he was perhaps grizzled.

No known portrait exists of any of the other characters. Metellus came of a family once distinguished for pointed noses, Domitius of a family once famed for red hair. Cornelia was famous for a grave and gentle beauty. She was young, though already a widow, when Pompey married her, a few months before the civil trouble began.

On the Fate of the Persons in this Tragedy

Philip. After religiously burning his master's body on the seashore, disappears from history.

Metellus Scipio. Fled from Pharsalia to Africa, where he carried on the war until 46 B. C., when he was defeated by Cæsar at Thapsus. Flying from Africa by sea, in bad weather, he was forced to put into the port of Hippo, where one of Cæsar's fleets lay at anchor. A battle followed. He is said to have drowned himself shortly before his ship was sunk.

Cn. Pompeius Theophanes. Returned to Italy, and was pardoned by Cæsar. He attained great fame as a writer. After his death the Lesbians paid him divine honours. His son held office under Augustus.

Marcus Cato. After Pharsalia, joined Scipio in Africa, and held command under him. He killed himself in Utica, shortly

after the battle of Thapsus, so that he might not live to see the final extinction of liberty. His son was killed at Philippi, "valiantly fighting against Augustus," four years later.

Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus. Was killed (some say by Mark Antony) either in the battle, or in the rout, of Pharsalia, at which he commanded the great brigade of horse, on the left of Pompey's army.

Marcus Acilius Glabrio. Continued in Cæsar's service, and rose to be governor of Achaia.

Lucius Lucceius. Returned to Rome, and received Cæsar's pardon. He was praised by Cicero for the excellence of his historical writings.

Lucius Afranius. After Pharsalia, joined Scipio in Africa, and held command under him, till the battle of Thapsus. While riding through Mauretania, on his way to Spain, after that disaster, he was ambushed and taken by Cæsar's lieutenant, P. Sitius. A few days later, the troops of Sitius killed him in a camp riot.

Lentulus Spinther. After Pharsalia, fled to Rhodes, where he was refused permission to land. He set sail again "much against his will," and either "perished ingloriously" or disappeared from history.

Achillas Egyptian. Was killed by Arsinöe (Ptolemy's sister) and the eunuch Ganymed in the year after Pompey's murder.

On the House of Pompey, After the Murder

Cornelia. After seeing her husband killed, fled to Cyrene, and thence to Rome, where, in time, Pompey's ashes were brought to her. She is said to have buried them "in a town of hers by the city of Alba," in Liguria.

Cn. Pompeius Magnus. The Triumvir's eldest son, by his third wife, Mucia, held Corcyra for a time, showing courage and bold strategic ideas. On hearing of his father's death, he went to Spain, where he raised a great army. He was defeated at the bloody battle of Munda, in the year 45. Soon after the

battle, he was betrayed, taken and killed. His head was carried to Seville and exposed there to the public gaze.

Sextus Pompeius Magnus. The younger son (also by Mucia) continued the war in Africa, with Cato's party, till after the battle of Thapsus. He then joined his brother in Spain. After Cæsar's murder, he was proscribed by Octavian, and took the seas, with a fleet, burning, sinking and intercepting commerce, till Octavian came to terms. On the recommencement of war between them, his fleet was beaten by Octavian's fleet under Agrippa. After trying vainly to beat up a force in Asia, he was taken and put to death at Miletus (probably by the order of Mark Antony) in the year 35. He left a daughter whose fate is uncertain. She was with him in Asia in 36.

Pompeia. The daughter (also by Mucia) married Faustus, the son of Sulla, who was killed with Afranius in the mutiny of the troops of P. Sitius, in Africa in 46. She afterwards married L. Cornelius Cinna. It is not known when she died; but it is certain that she predeceased her brother, Sextus. She had a son by Cornelius Cinna, who came to be Consul in A. D. 5. What became of her children by Faustus is not known.

And all their passionate hearts are dust,
And dust the great idea that burned
In various flames of love and lust
Till the world's brain was turned.

God, moving darkly in men's brains,
Using their passions as his tool,
Brings freedom with a tyrant's chains
And wisdom with the fool.

Blindly and bloodily we drift,
Our interests clog our hearts with dreams.
God make my brooding soul a rift
Through which a meaning gleams.

Feb. 8, 1908. *July 5, 1909.*

THE FAITHFUL

A TRAGEDY IN THREE ACTS

To

MY WIFE

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

THE FAITHFUL

NOTE: This play is written to be played uninterruptedly, without more break in the action than is necessary to get the actors off the stage and to raise the screen or curtain dividing the scenes.

There are only two scenes: one the front part of the stage, left quite bare, without decoration, but with a screen, set, or backcloth at the back, representing a Japanese landscape, with hills and water, all wintry and severe; the other, the back of the stage, visible when this screen is lifted, a room in a Japanese palace, very beautiful, but bare, save for a few flowers and a picture or two.

A few minutes may elapse between Acts I and II, and a slightly longer wait between Acts II and III.

PERSONS

ASANO, A Daimyo.
KURANO, his Counsellor.
HAZAMA.
SHODA.
KIRA, A Daimyo.
SAGISAKA, his Counsellor.
KAMEI, A Daimyo.
HONZO, his Counsellor.
A YOUTH of Kira's palace.
A WOMAN of Kira's palace.
THE ENVOY.
A POOR GIRL.
LADY KURANO.
A CAPTAIN of Kira's guards.
CHIKARA, Kurano's son.
FIRST RONIN.
SECOND do.
THIRD do.
FOURTH do.
FIFTH do.
A HERALD.
Guards, Nobles, Attendants, Ronin.

In Act I, Scene I, throughout Act II, and in Scenes I, II, and IV of Act III, the scene is: An open space near ASANO's palace.

In Act I, Scene II and in Act III, Scene III, the scene is: A room in Kira's palace.

TIME: Acts I and II, 10th March, 1701.
Act III, 10th March, 1702.

THE FAITHFUL

ACT I

SCENE I.—*The outer scene.* ASANO *alone, dawn. A shaft of light strikes colour.*

ASANO: [*Kneeling.*] Light that my soul has followed, bless this beloved land, where I work with my men to make life nobler. For now my work here is threatened by an evil man, who draws nearer daily, violating Right and Law. [*He rises and stands listening.*] Kurano.

KURANO: [*Off.*] Is that you, Asano?

[KURANO *enters*]

ASANO: Yes, my dear friend, I have waited for you; I need not ask your news, you bring no good news; I see that in your face.

KURANO: No; no good news. The Judges decided against us.

ASANO: You bring yourself at least. Does your wife know?

KURANO: Yes. I have sent to tell her. The men are here, if you will speak with them; they all look to you to save them.

ASANO: Let them come in. Do they guess that we have lost?

[KURANO *lifts a hand to the men*]

KURANO: Yes. They are all afraid of Kira. Come in, there.

[*The men come in and crowd about the lower steps*]

VOICES: Asano! Master Asano! Save us and defend us, beloved master. Lord Kurano, beseech our master to help us!

KURANO: Still! Let the head man come forward. Stand there, Hazama. Our master will speak to you.

[ASANO *comes forward*]

VOICES: Master Asano! Master Asano! Defend us, master!

ASANO: Friends and fellow-workers, it is now twenty years since I came among you on the death of my father. You know how, in that time, we have worked together, making this province one of the most fruitful, and quite the happiest, in the Empire. If I have failed in this or that, I know that I have won your friendship, and that you have been happy under me. Latterly, as you know, our happiness has been marred by the actions of an ambitious man, whom we now know as Lord Kira. Some of you can remember when that lord was a little boy, the son of a steward, in the house of old Lord Ashiza, who petted him for his cleverness. As you know, presently, when he grew up, he ousted the old lord and took his province. Since then, all of you have seen his treacheries bringing him nearer to this valley of ours, till at last nothing but the hills kept him from us. Last week Lord Kira claimed the hills and occupied them with hired troops, so that we could no longer pasture there. I made my protest against the seizure. Lord Kurano here has just returned from the Courts where the protest has been heard. He will read the Judges' finding.

VOICES: Ah, our master has saved us!

HAZAMA: Silence, silence!

KURANO: The Judges have decided that the protest lodged by Lord Asano cannot stand, and that the head of the valley claimed by Lord Kira is, truly, Lord Kira's property, together with its inhabitants and their possessions. And to this they set their seals. [*A moan passes over the crowd.*]

HAZAMA: But the head of the valley is free land, between two lordships. It has been free for centuries. It cannot be Lord Kira's.

KURANO: The Judges have decided that it is.

First Ronin: And all that mountain pasture, and the glen where our river rises, is to be his?

Kurano: Yes.

Hazama: So. Now he is at our throats.

Asano: It is bad news; but not hopeless. We have failed in these Courts; but Lord Kira is not here yet. We may still stop him. We must turn, now, to our work. Meanwhile do not quarrel with Kira's men, whatever the provocation, and above all trust me, and be of good hope. After all, a way may be found. Dismiss, and to work, Hazama.

Hazama: We thank you, master Asano. God knows we trust you.

Voices: Thank you, master.

Hazama: Dismiss now to work, as the master bids. [*They go out.*]

Kurano: What hope have you, then?

Asano: None.

Kirano: None?

Asano: Only a faith, and that is shaken, that the triumph of the wicked is a short one.

Kurano: It was a wicked judgment; the Judges were bribed.

Asano: It seems that Kira is to have this province. We shall be his next prey. And I have been thinking through the night how much this place means to me. I see that all this will have to end. Our life here and all that we have tried to do is at Kira's mercy. We muster some seventy men and boys; Kira since his marriage has a thousand. What can we do?

Kurano: Rebel and die.

ASANO: Yes, we could do that. But I want what we have sown to live. You know how my ancestors first came here. They were driven from home and roved till they reached this glen, where they could live at peace. I shall do that, Kurano. I shall give up and go, with all my people.

KURANO: Where to?

ASANO: To the outer islands.

KURANO: And leave this a prey to Kira?

ASANO: It is that already.

KURANO: Without a protest?

ASANO: What other protest can I make? My men are like my sons, they shall not be trampled out by Kira. I will carry them out of his reach.

KURANO: And when would you go?

ASANO: Soon.

KURANO: It will break your heart to leave this.

ASANO: Never mind, if I save my men from Kira. I only hesitate for your sake, for you have a wife and son, with a right to something better than exile.

KURANO: There is a kind of exile which is a grand career for any wife or son. . . . But, Asano, I say that you must not abandon this place, but meet Kira with arms, and bring it to civil war here. No one has dared that yet, so Kira has prospered. He is not a robber; he is nothing so noble; he is a knave. If you fight him he will draw back and it will come to the Commander's ears, and justice will be done.

ASANO: What justice, Kurano? What justice should I get in any Court in this land?

KURANO: The justice that every man like myself does you with his whole heart.

ASANO: My dear Kurano, what Court in the land would not decide for Kira, the ready and the lucky, rather than for me, the friend of man? Kira would ask nothing better than for me to attack him. I am suspect, an innovator, an unorthodox. Every knight in the land would be glad to see me ruined. Besides . . . the worth of the law has been proved already in yesterday's case. My instinct tells me to withdraw, with all who stand by me.

KURANO: My instinct tells you to stand firm.

ASANO: That course needs your power, which I have not got.

KURANO: Here it is, by you.

ASANO: We must live by our own laws, Kurano. No angel is given two messages. I shall warn my people to-night that we shall abandon these old homes of ours. Leave word with Hazama that they muster.

KURANO: It will be a terrible night to your friends.

ASANO: I expect the parting to have every circumstance of pain.

KURANO: You spoke a moment ago as though you were hated and Kira loved. Surely you must know that Kira has made enemies wherever he has gone.

ASANO: He has made slaves, Kurano. His enemies are dead or beggared.

KURANO: He is feared, then. All who fear him would rally to the first man to stand against him.

ASANO: Some things are given to me, Kurano, to know burningly. I know that Kira has a conquering star, and none can stand against him yet. His cup is not full. We will go into the wilderness with what we believe.

KURANO: You are making a mistake, Asano.

ASANO: I see this too clearly for that.

KURANO: You are despairing.

ASANO: I neither despair nor fear: I see.

KURANO: You take the men's view. They think that Kira is a power. They will find out their mistake too late.

ASANO: They will have their freedom at least.

KURANO: Perhaps. I will tell Hazama to muster them after work to-night. They seem merry yonder. Listen! there! There again.

[*A sound of clapping and cheering draws slowly nearer*]

ASANO: There is little cause for rejoicing in this place.

KURANO: What can they be cheering for?

VOICES: Victory. Asano. Victory. Saved. Victory.

ASANO: Can they have been fighting Kira's men?

KURANO: I hope so. Hark!

[*The* Men *appear*]

VOICES: Victory. Master Asano, they are ruined. Kira is ruined.

[*The* Men *crowd up*]

ASANO: How is Kira ruined?

KURANO: Keep back. Keep back. Let Hazama come forward. Let the head man speak; silence, the others.

ASANO: What news have you, Hazama?

HAZAMA: Master Asano, we left you, even now, feeling that Lord Kira was at our throats; we had little hope but to be slaves, and worse than that for some of us. We went away in despair, Master Asano, and now a blessing has come upon us.

ASANO: Can the decree be annulled, Kurano?

KURANO: No. What blessing, Hazama? How has a blessing come?

HAZAMA: We had gone but a little way, to the cross-roads by the bridge, when there came the noise of a horse and a man galloped up, a tall man, in a broidered cloak, riding a stallion which was all great flecks of foam. And when he pulled up, the wind blew the cloak back and we saw all gold, and never once for thirty years has the like been seen here. He was a trumpeter.

KURANO: Is this one of their visions?

ASANO: I do not understand. What trumpeter?

HAZAMA: A trumpeter from the Presence. He blew a great blast on a trumpet, and cried out that we were to prepare.

Then he said if any of us had a complaint to make, or a petition to give, or suffered from any wrong, or were in fear or misery, we were to take heart.

KURANO: Yes?

HAZAMA: Because the very Presence has sent an Envoy here to right all troubles, master, and now Lord Kira will be driven back and we be at peace again.

VOICES: It is blessed news, master.

ASANO: Thank you, Hazama. Since the Envoy has come from the Presence, a thing unknown in our time, we may be sure that injustice will be redressed. Where is the Envoy?

HAZAMA: He is in the province already, master, and his Court is to be held to-day.

ASANO: Thank you. Let this news reassure you. Return now to your work, and be thankful to that August One who watches even over us, in this far corner.

HAZAMA: We are very mindful of Him, Master Asano.

VOICES: We give thanks to Him for this doing of justice.

[*They go out.*]

ASANO: This alters everything. I shall go at once to the Envoy's Court and appeal against Kira.

KURANO: I will come with you. Perhaps the Court has heard of Kira and decided to check him.

ASANO: You are too hopeful, Kurano. I only hope for a little crumb of justice in this question of the hills.

KURANO: Will you speak to the men to-night, notwithstanding?

ASANO: I will wait till I know what the day brings forth.

[*Enter* SHODA]

SHODA: Have I the honour of speaking to Lord Asano?

ASANO: I am Asano.

SHODA: I come from the Envoy now visiting this province to tell you that you are to be specially honoured by him.

ASANO: The Envoy's wishes are a law to me, and his honour more than I deserve.

SHODA: You have been appointed to be the Envoy's host when he holds his Court to-day.

ASANO: That is an honour indeed, and a very grateful pleasure.

SHODA: I am happy that my message pleases you. The Lord Kamei who is, I believe, your friend, will act with you and share your task.

ASANO: That will add to my pleasure. I have long known Kamei.

SHODA: The Envoy wishes me to say that he looks forward with much happiness to so pleasant a means of meeting you, of whom he has so often heard praise.

ASANO: I hope that my welcome will not be unworthy of so generous a lord. Before you go, will you not rest in my house a little?

SHODA: I cannot, thank you. The ceremony will begin so soon. I must return.

KURANO: Is not the ritual of receiving the Envoy a difficult one?

ASANO: I know nothing of the ritual.

SHODA: That difficulty has been foreseen and arranged for. Your friend Lord Kira, will instruct you in the ritual.

ASANO: Lord Kira?

SHODA: Lord Kira, yes. He will receive you at any hour, the earlier the better, since the ceremony will be held at noon. He is expecting you now.

ASANO: Where is he waiting for us?

SHODA: At his palace. The Envoy's reception will take place in Lord Kira's palace.

ASANO: We will wait upon Lord Kira.

SHODA: I shall look forward to meeting you there after the ceremony. Good-bye till then.

KURANO: Good-bye. [SHODA *goes.*]

ASANO: So Kira is to teach us the ritual, and I am to receive the Envoy in Kira's palace. The issue is joined indeed.

KURANO: It could not fall out better. You will front Kira and accuse him in his own house, before all the nobles of the province.

ASANO: I am troubled though. I am to be his pupil.

KURANO: I shall be with you. Come. The chess-board is set.

ASANO: Still, I am troubled. I feel that Kira has contrived this, for reasons that I cannot see. I wish that this had not happened.

KURANO: You will only meet Kira officially, for a prescribed ceremony. You will not even be the only pupil, for Lord Kamei will be learning with you.

ASANO: I have misgivings.

KURANO: All great things come from misgivings.

ASANO: Come then. It is time. Even at our wisest Fate uses us; and I shall be with you.

[*A messenger runs in*]

THIRD RONIN: Lord Kurano. Lord Kurano. Your lady.

KURANO: What? What is it?

THIRD RONIN: Your lady has fallen, Lord Kurano, on the palace steps.

ASANO: Is she killed?

THIRD RONIN: Please God, no, my lord. But she calls for you and they think her dying.

ASANO: You must go. I will go on alone to Kira.

KURANO: If I can come, I will follow you.

ASANO: I trust you will find all well. Go now.

KURANO: Take me to where she is. [*Turning.*] Asano, promise me one thing.

ASANO: What?

KURANO: That you will be on your guard with Kira; that you will not let yourself be led away by him.

ASANO: I am playing for all these souls, Kurano. But who can promise for himself?

KURANO: You can and must. Do you understand? He may provoke you. Whatever the provocation, be calm. May the gods guard you, Asano.

ASANO: They guard us. You, too.

KURANO: Please Heaven. I have misgivings now. I wish I were coming with you.

ASANO: We are being played by the gods. Go, now, quickly.

KURANO: Yes. Pray the gods I may follow quickly.

ASANO: Now hurry. I shall be late. [*They part and go off right and left.* ASANO *turns.*] Kurano. Good-bye, Kurano.

[*He watches* KURANO *go*]

CURTAIN

SCENE II.—*The inner scene*

KIRA: God of my fortunes, who hast brought me from being the steward's son to be Lord Kira. Now that the last enemy, Asano, is within the net, grant me thy intellectual power, that I may strike him to the ground. [*Comes forward.*] Then with jewels and dominations I shall go on. My power will stretch to the sea. There is no drunkenness like power. Sagisaka.

[SAGISAKA *enters*]

SAGISAKA: My lord.

KIRA: Now the sun rises, friend.

SAGISAKA: Yes, my lord.

KIRA: You see you were wrong. That stroke on the valley-head prospered.

SAGISAKA: They will appeal, my lord.

KIRA: Yes, but meanwhile they have to learn the ritual. Have they come yet?

SAGISAKA: Asano and Kamei have come. They are outside.

KIRA: Tell me more of Kamei.

SAGISAKA: An honest, blunt man, wealthy, too; he has a pearl fishery.

KIRA: He is not a friend of Asano's?

SAGISAKA: They are said to be friendly.

KIRA: Nothing in the nature of allies?

SAGISAKA: No.

KIRA: Let us see these pupils. [SAGISAKA *opens the door.*]

[*Enter* KAMEI, HONZO, *and* ASANO]

KIRA: Who are you? Are you Lord Kamei?

KAMEI: Yes.

KIRA: Who is with you?

KAMEI: My attendant, Honzo.

KIRA: And this is Lord Asano. Is anyone with you?

ASANO: No, Lord Kira.

KIRA: You have come to me to learn the ritual for the reception of the Emperor's Envoy. I have to tell you that the Envoy is even now within this palace, and that this is therefore a sacred place. I need not remind you that a place so hallowed exacts a reverence. My duty prescribes that I declare this room hallowed. Whoever breaks its peace, by violent act or oath, by blow or by the drawing of a weapon, is liable to the punishment of death, with confiscation of goods; so the Emperor's edict prescribes. You understand?

KAMEI: Yes.

KIRA: You, Lord Asano; do you understand?

ASANO: Perfectly.

KIRA: You have a look as though you did not understand so perfectly. Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: My Lord?

KIRA: Are not these pupils very late?

SAGISAKA: They appeared to think not, at the door, my lord, but they are late, some twenty minutes.

KIRA: It is very annoying, that there should be so little care to be punctual. Give word for my cordial to be brought. [SAGISAKA *goes to the door.*] Why do you stand, sir, so near to the pupils?

HONZO: I am in attendance upon Lord Kamei.

KIRA: Your place is near the door, till you are wanted.

HONZO: I am sorry, my lord, I did not know. [*The cordial enters.*]

KIRA: And why do you come unattended?

ASANO: Lord Kurano, who was coming with me, was detained.

KIRA: What detained him?

ASANO: An accident to his wife.

KIRA: Give me the cordial there. [*Drinks.*] Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: My lord?

KIRA: Has any apology been received from this gentleman, for coming alone?

SAGISAKA: No, my lord.

ASANO: If an apology is necessary, let me state my regret now. Nothing but this sudden accident would have kept Lord Kurano from being present. I still hope he may be here.

KIRA: Yes. But how am I to know that this accident is not merely an excuse to be away?

ASANO: I have the honour to tell you.

KIRA: Can you vouch for the accident or have you only heard of it?

ASANO: I heard of it, from a man on whose truth I can depend.

KIRA: "Truth" and "depend." And I have to depend on your dependence in condonation of your fault, which is tantamount to an impiety. Why did you bring no other friend, when you knew that Lord Kurano could not come?

ASANO: As I said, Lord Kira, I still hope that Lord Kurano may come here in time.

KIRA: You were not here in time yourself. You have been guilty of great disrespect, both in coming late and in coming alone. Remove these cups. Ah, Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: My lord?

KIRA: What is the other person's name?

SAGISAKA: Kamei, my lord.

KIRA: Kamei. What made you late?

KAMEI: I was not late, Lord Kira.

KIRA: You will not improve your case by denial. You have heard this gentleman say that you are late.

KAMEI: He is not a gentleman.

SAGISAKA: They came on foot to the gate. The porter took them for beggars.

KIRA: I have heard, and the Envoy has heard, of new opinions in this province, of a want of respect for sacred things, of contempt for order, and distaste for duty. I grieve to find evi-

dence of all these things in your behaviour to-day. You come late, you come improperly, unattended, dusty, and inclined to rudeness. The Envoy will be pained to hear my report of you.

KAMEI: Lord Kira, we have come to learn the ritual from you. If, as you say, we are late, it might be well if you would confine yourself to that.

KIRA: You will remember this person's remarks.

SAGISAKA: Yes, my lord.

KIRA: I will read those letters if you will bring them to me. [*Reads.*] You may take this one, Sagisaka. [*Gives letter.*] This needs no answer. Asano, I have a letter here from my steward. He complains that in spite of the Judges' verdict yesterday your men still persist in occupying my pasture.

ASANO: Lord Kira, your steward is mistaken.

KIRA: That is not possible. Here is his letter.

ASANO: Do you depend upon his truth?

KIRA: I do.

ASANO: And I am to depend on your dependence in an accusation of the kind? Well, Lord Kira, all my men, without exception, have been in attendance at my house through the night.

KIRA: You will have to prove that.

ASANO: As you please.

KAMEI: Lord Kira, I have no concern with your private quarrels with Lord Asano; it is very painful to have to listen to them. I take it as a gross breach of privilege that you refer to them at all in your present position. I must ask you to perform the duty, for which I am in attendance; otherwise I must withdraw, to claim the respect not yet offered to me.

KIRA: As my pupil, you have neither the right to make remarks nor the power to withdraw. Within this Court you

attend my instruction, at my pleasure, and obey my will at my bidding; that is your province as pupil; I, as teacher, will attend to mine. If your gross ignorance and crass conceit mislead you, let me set you right; for I, here, Lord Kamei, represent a sacred Envoy, and will brook no babbling from a grey-haired country clown.

HONZO: For God's sake, stop him!

ASANO: Be quiet, Kamei; be quiet.

KAMEI: This man sat with my lackeys.

ASANO: I know, I know, but you are in his power if you stir.

KAMEI: The dog! The dog! I have seen him eat broken meats after the feast. I will not be quiet.

ASANO: You shall, Kamei, you shall not ruin yourself.

KIRA: Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: My lord?

KIRA: Request these people to be silent.

SAGISAKA: Be silent, you, and you.

KAMEI: What do you bid me?

KIRA: [*Rapping with his fan.*] Be silent, please. Prepare yourselves to learn the ritual.
Lord Kamei, you are the elder of my two pupils?

KAMEI: Yes.

KIRA: Come forward, please. [KAMEI *advances.*]
It is with your goodwill that you come to learn this ceremony?

KAMEI: What do you mean by that question? I am here.

KIRA: Do you come with your goodwill?

ASANO: Answer, man, answer.

HONZO: Say, yes, master, or it will be ruin, ruin.

KIRA: Will you two, to whom I am not speaking, keep farther back? Must I repeat my question, Lord Kamei? There is a prescribed form which I have to follow. I ask you, do you come here of your own will, freely?

ASANO: Say yes.

KAMEI: Yes, I do.

KIRA: Come nearer to me, Kamei.

KAMEI: I am here, Lord Kira.

KIRA: Kneel down, kindly. [KAMEI *kneels.*] Fasten my shoe for me.

KAMEI: Perhaps I do not understand you, quite.

KIRA: The clasp of my shoe is loose, I ask you to clasp it.

KAMEI: Ask me?

KIRA: I tell you. Fasten it.

KAMEI: You tell me to fasten your shoe?

KIRA: Yes.

KAMEI: Then—— [*The door at the back opens with a clang.*]

[SHODA *appears*]

SHODA: Pardon my intrusion upon this office. I had the misfortune to interrupt you, Lord Kamei. The Envoy requests me to desire your immediate presence, Lord Kira, if you will be so good as to go to him.

KIRA: Thank you. I break up this Court. Come, Sagisaka.

[KIRA *and* SHODA *go out*]

SAGISAKA: Stay, you, till my lord returns. [*Exit.*]

HONZO: Intolerable. It was intolerable.

KAMEI: That is the end, however.

ASANO: Kamei, you have been wonderful.

KAMEI: He went too far, Honzo.

HONZO: My lord, I thank God you kept the peace.

KAMEI: I shall keep it no longer. Give me that dirk you wear.

HONZO: What are you going to do, my lord?

ASANO: Do not give it, Honzo. Kamei, you have been right, up to this very last. We have only to keep calm through this; we can appeal to the Envoy.

KAMEI: What has the Envoy to do with this, Asano? This concerns my personal honour. The upstart told me to clasp his shoebuckle. Give me your dirk, Honzo. [*Snatches the dirk.*]

HONZO: My lord, my lord.

ASANO: No, no, Kamei, no; you cannot claim a precedence. This concerns us three.

KAMEI: You were not told to handle his shoes. You are not an old man who has seen this dog fawning at his lackey's pantry for scraps and gobbets. You are a young man, with work, and you are an old man with sons. I am only an old man with a memory of what was, and I am going to kill that man.

ASANO: Kamei, Kamei, can you not see that a riot is what Kira wants? We two are his last rivals here. He has contrived all this to trap us; it is death if we lift a finger. If we endure this till the Envoy comes, we can appeal, and Kira will be degraded. Give me that dirk, for all our sakes.

KAMEI: Not I, Asano.

HONZO: Lord Kamei.

KAMEI: [*Putting them aside.*] My mind is made up.

HONZO: Master Kamei, I have served you many years now. I carried you when you were little, when I was a lad, pikeman to the Emperor. I promised the old knight, your father, that I would mind you, and I have, master, many's the time, and your sweet lady, my mistress, and the young knights, your sons. This lord is right, Master Kamei, it is a trap to bring you to death. I saw it in his look directly he began. I saw him smile when he touched you. Lord Kamei, it is not only your death that would follow if you struck him, but the beggary of your lady and her babes; and this lord is right, that you should bear till the Presence comes.

KAMEI: I will not bear.

HONZO: Then it is for me to save you, Lord Kamei; I will kill Lord Kira.

KAMEI: Please keep from me. If death is the penalty, I am ready for death.

Lord Asano, Honzo; I am grieved if I have spoken rudely to you. I count upon you not to interfere. Take these trappings, Honzo, and the purse. [*Gives things.*] Honzo, please go to the door, and tell me if Lord Kira is coming back.

HONZO: [*At door.*] He is in the corridor, talking to a woman.

KAMEI: Is his guard there?

HONZO: No. Ah!

KAMEI: Is he coming?

HONZO: Yes.

KAMEI: Alone?

HONZO: No, the girl, too.

KAMEI: On which side?

HONZO: The right.

KAMEI: I'll stand here, then.

HONZO: [*Speaking through.*] God deliver us. God deliver us.

KAMEI: Stand away, Honzo. Keep behind me.

HONZO: This is the end of it all; the end of everything.

KAMEI: Be quiet. Come, Kira.

HONZO: He's at the door.

KAMEI: Hush! Listen!

HONZO: Hark!

KAMEI: Quiet, Honzo.

ASANO: What is it?

KAMEI: He has gone past, I think.

HONZO: Please God.

KAMEI: Look, Honzo, softly.

HONZO: [*At door.*] He is there.

KAMEI: Where?

HONZO: [*Pointing.*] There.

KAMEI: Just outside?

HONZO: His hand upon the latch.

KAMEI: Then make your peace, Kira.

KIRA: [*As he half opens the door.*] That must wait till to-night.

A WOMAN'S VOICE: Yes, but there is another thing.

KIRA: What can that be?

VOICE: No, that shall wait till to-night, too.

KIRA: No, you must tell me. [*Closes door again. The* Voice *laughs.*]

KIRA: [*Off.*] You will not escape like that.

KAMEI: Kiss your farewell to her.

HONZO: They are moving down the corridor.

ASANO: She is singing.

KAMEI: Look, Honzo. Look.

HONZO: They are there. She is gone now. He is coming.

KAMEI: Quickly, then, behind me; farther back.

ASANO: Now.

HONZO: Here.

[SHODA *enters behind them quietly and goes to* KAMEI]

KAMEI: [*Thinking that he is* HONZO]. Keep away, Honzo. Keep from me. I warn you. [*Turning*]. Who is this? Who are you? Ah, Lord Shoda.

SHODA: Lord Kamei, may I have the pleasure of waiting on you to your robing-room?

KAMEI: Ah, have I to robe?

SHODA: If you will forgive the trouble. You, too, Lord Asano.

ASANO: We have not yet been taught the ritual.

SHODA: That will be taught when you are robed. Will you come, then? These ceremonies are tedious; but the Envoy keenly looks forward to meeting you. This will be the way. Perhaps this gentleman will wait [*indicating* HONZO].

[*He takes out* ASANO *and* KAMEI]

HONZO: [*Kneeling.*] You gods who have granted me this moment's truce, help me to save my master.

[*Enter* SAGISAKA. *The two eye each other*]

SAGISAKA: Well, fellow?

HONZO: Look.

SAGISAKA: What?

HONZO: This. It is my master's purse.

SAGISAKA: I suppose money is a rare sight where you come from?

HONZO: [*Jingling money.*] Could you get me a moment's private talk with Lord Kira, here, now, this very instant?

SAGISAKA: For you? What if I could?

HONZO: [*Jingling.*] This . . . to begin with.

SAGISAKA: Let me see it.

HONZO: When Lord Kira is here.

SAGISAKA: I want more than that.

HONZO: You shall have more, if you will bring him at once.

SAGISAKA: What do you want Lord Kira for?

HONZO: I will tell him when he comes. Only bring him.

SAGISAKA: I must have something to tell him.

HONZO: Say I must speak to him.

SAGISAKA: Must? Must speak? Well . . . [*Going.*] But if you want him like this; no [*stops*]. I have myself to consider. I cannot fetch him till you have made it worth my while.

[*Enter* KIRA]

KIRA: Fetch whom?

HONZO: Lord Kira, will you grant me the favour of a moment's talk?

KIRA: A moment's talk?

SAGISAKA: He has been troubling me, my lord, with a great deal of nonsense about talking to you. He is foolish.

HONZO: It is for Lord Kamei, Lord Kira.

KIRA: For Lord Kamei? Lord Kamei can speak for himself.

HONZO: I am his treasurer, Lord Kira.

KIRA: Yes? What then?

HONZO: Might we be alone, Lord Kira, for a moment only?

KIRA: Go, Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: [*Passing* KIRA.] Have a care, my lord; he may be planning you a mischief for what you said to his master.

KIRA: What? You think that?

SAGISAKA: There is a strange look in his eyes.

KIRA: There is. You, man; put down that cloak you are carrying. What weapons have you in your sleeves?

HONZO: None, my lord.

KIRA: Feel him, Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: There is nothing, my lord. What have you done with your dirk?

HONZO: I lost it.

SAGISAKA: Yes, where you lost your wits, I think.

KIRA: Leave us then, Sagisaka. [*Exit* SAGISAKA, *back.*] Well, treasurer.

HONZO: Lord Kira, where we live we are not used to Court ceremony, so we sometimes offend. My master has asked me to say this, lest you should be annoyed at our country way. He, I mean we, have put you to a great deal of trouble in this matter of the ritual. If we might make some return, without offence, as a sign of how much we feel it; if you would not misunderstand.

KIRA: I shall not misunderstand a kind thought.

HONZO: We have heard that you collect jewels, Lord Kira.

KIRA: I have a few jewels.

HONZO: We in the country are sometimes able to help in the matter of jewels, what with the mines and the pearl-fishery. Lord Kamei thought that perhaps you might like to see these pearls.

KIRA: These are black pearls.

HONZO: Yes, your lordship might call them black. We . . . we . . . we did not like to set them . . . as your lordship's taste is so well known . . . If you would accept them from Lord Kamei, it would be a pleasure . . . as a return for your kindness, Lord Kira.

KIRA: This is very handsome of Kamei. I shall be very pleased to have them. They are very fine. There are few things so rare. I shall set them . . . how shall I set them?

HONZO: If your lordship cares for these things, Lord Kamei will be pleased to show you his collection.

KIRA: That is a pleasure we must arrange. Your name is Honzo, I think. I thank you, Honzo. But I think your master must be robed and we must proceed. Will you withdraw through that door, Honzo, while we go on? I thank you. I shall thank your master.

[HONZO *goes actors' left.* KAMEI *enters actors' right*]

KAMEI: Now, Kira.

KIRA: No, Lord Kamei, let be me beforehand with you. See. I fling down my sword. I kneel to you. Listen. I ask your pardon for my rudeness.

KAMEI: You ask my pardon?

KIRA: Yes, for my gross insolence; I ask it kneeling. . . . My dear lord, let me congratulate you. You stood the test superbly.

KAMEI: You explain yourself.

KIRA: You do not know these rituals.

KAMEI. No. Nor wish to know more.

KIRA: You will perhaps understand, when I tell you that the early part of the teaching is designed to test the pupil's loyalty, his reverence for an Envoy's person, which it is important to know. You were wonderful. There can be few more loyal subjects than you. The Envoy, who was listening, was most pleased with you. And now you must forgive me, and allow me to say how pained I was to insult you in that way. Come, you must shake hands, and to-night you must honour me, you must be my guest.

KAMEI: Well. Say no more. There is my hand. You certainly put me to a test.

KIRA: Yes; it is a test. Sometimes in these rituals men who have not your marvellous forbearance are brought to the brink of murder.

KAMEI: Self-control is a great gift.

KIRA: To tell the truth, the test to-day was more strict than usual; for, between ourselves, there has been talk of disloyalty, new ideas, irreverence, in this province, and the good wheat is being sifted.

But, come, that unpleasantness is over. The ritual is simply this. Come with me here. [*Leads him actors' left.*] Your place will be here. You will be told when to come forward. Then you will . . . [*Whispers.*] You understand?

KAMEI: Is that all?

KIRA: Yes. I leave you now. And let me thank you very warmly for your charming conduct and willing pupilage. [*Shakes his hand, leaves him in prompt wings and returns to central stage.*] Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: My lord.

[*Enters*]

KIRA: See that Lord Kamei's men are treated with every care.

SAGISAKA: Yes, Lord Kira.

KIRA: Has Lord Asano's friend come, this Kurano?

SAGISAKA: No, my lord.

KIRA: Is he in sight? Look and tell me.

SAGISAKA: There is a horseman on the road, riding fast.

KIRA: How far is he?

SAGISAKA: Three minutes; four . . .

KIRA: Is it likely to be Kurano?

SAGISAKA: It might be.

KIRA: Kurano is the wise man of the two; he is a man of sense?

SAGISAKA: He is said to have more than his master.

KIRA: I can wait three minutes. Put these pearls in the treasury. See that man Honzo well cared for; specially well.

SAGISAKA: Yes, my lord. Have you as much time to spare as you think, my lord?

KIRA: I can wait two minutes more for Kurano.

SAGISAKA: That horseman does not seem to be coming here, my lord; he is turning off at the cross-roads; he is going towards the hills.

KIRA: Is anyone else in sight?

SAGISAKA: No. Very far away there is a horseman.

KIRA: How far?

SAGISAKA: Just come in sight, my lord, and walking.

KIRA: That would be ten minutes?

SAGISAKA: Quite, my lord.

KIRA: I cannot wait so long. I must go on. Let the other come; Asano.

[SAGISAKA *goes actors' right and opens door*]

SAGISAKA: Will you come in?

[ASANO *enters.* SAGISAKA *goes out back*]

KIRA: Your friend has not come, Lord Asano.

ASANO: I am grieved. I fear his wife is badly hurt.

KIRA: I am sorry.

ASANO: I will tell him of your sympathy.

KIRA: What is that?

ASANO: I will tell him of your sympathy.

KIRA: Ah, yes.
But I regret his absence for another reason, which has nothing to do with an accident to a woman.

ASANO: Indeed.

KIRA: I presume that I may count upon his coming later?

ASANO: I cannot answer for him.

KIRA: I presume that I may count upon someone coming on your behalf, if not now at least in connection with your visit?

ASANO: No one will come on my behalf, Lord Kira.

KIRA: It is a great pity that Lord Kurano is not here; I fear you do not understand me.

ASANO: I understand you perfectly well, Lord Kira. You are hinting that you would like a bribe. I tell you frankly that you hint to the wrong man. I would not make you a present if you held my life in your hand. Now teach me the ritual, as you are bidden, and let me hear no more of hinting and presuming. You pollute this place and degrade your office.

KIRA: You misunderstand, Lord Asano; but you are right, we will proceed to the ritual. Come with me here. [*Leads him actors' right.*] Your place will be here. You will be told when to come forward. Then you will . . . [*Whispers.*] Do you understand?

ASANO: From here?

KIRA: Yes.

ASANO: It is not easy to do.

KIRA: Surely.

ASANO: Can I not rehearse it?

KIRA: The ceremony must begin. I will leave you here. [*He remains alone on the stage; goes slowly back.*] Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: [*Entering.*] My lord?

KIRA: The hosts are instructed in their duty.

SAGISAKA: The Envoy is ready to proceed, Lord Kira.

KIRA: As he pleases.

[*Kneels.* SAGISAKA *goes out,* NOBLES *enter*]

Be humble and prepare for the glory that has come among us.

[*The* ENVOY *enters*]

VOICES: We give thanks for this mercy vouchsafed.

THE ENVOY: May peace be here; may rightousness be done here.

KIRA: Be it again declared, that he who breaks the peace or does unrighteousness within these walls, dies, as an outlaw, with the greater and lesser confiscations.

VOICES: Be it enacted as it is declared.

THE ENVOY: Who welcomes us in this holy place?

KIRA: Those whom the Presence has honoured, if it be so willed.

THE ENVOY: It is so willed.

[*The door, actors' left, opens.* KAMEI *appears and performs his rite properly.*]

KAMEI: I have the honour to welcome you.

THE ENVOY: [*Raising him to the seat at his right.*] We thank you for this welcome, which we well know proceeds from love. Few things are so pleasant to us as this evidence of love for Him whom we all serve, and the knowledge that all which you do for ourselves, great though it is, in the saving of pain as well as in the warmth of welcome, would be done in far fuller measure for Him, were He to be here.

Nor is it less pleasant to see again old rites and customs feelingly observed, and to remember the beautiful meaning hidden in them by the reverence of our fathers, by whom we live. For what we do here keeps alive what was passionate in the thought

of our fathers; a thankful and holy task, which none but an impious man would slight or bring to mockery.

It is so willed.

[*The door (right) opens.* ASANO *enters, advances on his knees, stumbling in his robes, and takes the* ENVOY'S *hands. The* NOBLES *laugh.*]

THE ENVOY: What is this outrage?

KIRA: What has possessed you, Asano?

THE ENVOY: Do you do this to insult me?

ASANO: Insult you? I do not understand.

KIRA: This is monstrous.

ASANO: I did as I was bid, my lord. [*Looking round, he sees all the* NOBLES *tittering.*] You planned this, Kira, to shame me.

KIRA: Do not aggravate your offence, Asano. Hold him, he will kill the Envoy.

ASANO: You shall not live to boast of it. [*Draws dirk and strikes at* KIRA.] Die, you.

NOBLES: Part them; quick, part them.

KAMEI: God, he has killed him.

ASANO: There, Kira.

SAGISAKA: No.

ASANO: Yes, I say.

SAGISAKA: Let go. I have you. Drop the dirk. Wrest it from him.

A VOICE: You shall not.

A VOICE: I have it. No, Lord Asano, come.

KIRA: Oh! remember, remember; this is a holy place.

KAMEI: Lord Kira is bleeding.

KIRA: Never mind me, look to the Envoy. He stabbed at the Envoy.

KAMEI: Hold him, he is fainting.

A VOICE: Fetch water. He has been stabbed to the brain.

KAMEI: Lean on me, Lord Kira.

THE ENVOY: Is he dead?

KAMEI: Blind with the blood, I think, my lord. It is a cut along the brow. Have you a cloth? The cloth, there!

A VOICE: This is a terrible thing, Lord Asano.

THE ENVOY: Little did I think that I should live to see new principles lead to so blasphemous a sacrilege. I suspend this Court. Let the wound be dressed. How bad is the wound?

KAMEI: A shallow cut, my lord.

A VOICE: The knife must have slipped, or it would have killed him.

THE ENVOY: See to it, Shoda. Where is this man?

KIRA: My lord, although his aim was to make it seem that I had not taught him the ceremony, and afterwards perhaps to kill me, I make no charge against him. He has been at law with me and is prejudiced and passionate; I think not really wicked. As far as any injury has been done to me, I ask for his pardon, my lord.

THE ENVOY: That well becomes you, Lord Kira. I wish that I could grant a pardon. Take him, Shoda, before the cut stiffens.

[KIRA *is led out*]

This outlaw, now. It is Asano, is it not?

ASANO: Yes, lord.

THE ENVOY: Asano, if you are not still blind with passion, listen to me.

Perhaps even now you do not understand your position.

ASANO: I understand it.

THE ENVOY: That I am thankful for; because you stand upon the brink of ruin.

I wish that, as Lord Kira asks, it were possible to pardon you. But society is held together solely by the chain of order, and to weaken a link of that chain is to bring in chaos. Think of what you have done, and of what you have outraged, but do not think, for a moment, that your sin can be lightly punished.

ASANO: The net was set for me and I am caught. I am too wise, my lord, to appeal against the machine of this world, against the strong, unscrupulous man and old custom. I have outraged both. But I should not have outraged either had not something higher been outraged, something here in me. Well, you have me.

THE ENVOY: You do not realise your offence, Asano. Your sin is that of blasphemous, sacrilegious passion, shedding blood upon consecrated ground. I will consider your case. Remove him. Bring him to a sense of how he stands. Stay, Lord Kamei.

[*All go, save* KAMEI]

He is an intemperate man, I fear. Do you know him?

KAMEI: He is a gentle, quiet man, my lord.

THE ENVOY: He is a free thinker, they tell me.

KAMEI: I cannot answer for a man's thoughts, my lord.

THE ENVOY: You can deplore what they lead to, I hope.

KAMEI: My lord, we are all subject to passion. Kira so insulted me this morning, that I was on the verge of killing him.

THE ENVOY: The verge is the line between man and devil, and men keep within it. Leave me. [KAMEI *goes*. *A pause*.]

[*A* YOUTH *enters*]

THE YOUTH: I beg pardon, my lord.

THE ENVOY: What is it?

THE YOUTH: I was to cense the room, my lord. [*A pause*.]

THE ENVOY: Boy.

THE YOUTH: Yes, my lord.

THE ENVOY: Do you believe in God?

THE YOUTH: Yes, sir.

THE ENVOY: Would you forgive a man who had broken the peace in the house of God?

THE YOUTH: Broken it, my lord?

THE ENVOY: Yes, drawn a knife there and tried to kill a man.

THE YOUTH: It would depend on what the other man had done.

THE ENVOY: Say that the other man had insulted him and made a mock of him?

THE YOUTH: That's a hard case, my lord.

THE ENVOY: Would you forgive him or would you put him to death?

THE YOUTH: My lord, it's a hard case; I would forgive him.

THE ENVOY: Why?

THE YOUTH: No man would do a thing like that unless there was excuse.

THE ENVOY: So you would forgive him. Freely?

THE YOUTH: As I would hope to be forgiven myself, my lord.

THE ENVOY: Ah! Will you find Lord Shoda for me? He is outside there. [*The* YOUTH *goes. Pause.* SHODA *comes.*] Shoda, I have considered this case. Order the other ministrants to leave the precincts.

SHODA: Very well, my lord. Shall I bring the prisoner to you?

THE ENVOY: Not yet. See that Lord Kamei goes.

SHODA: I will, my lord.

THE ENVOY: When you go, please order the room here to be laid with mattings. [*Exit at actors' left.*]

SHODA: I will give order, my lord.

[*The* YOUTH *enters to cense the room*]

THE YOUTH: [*Censing.*]

One and two and three
Sweet spirits sweeten me;
With thy precious grace
Be about this place;
Let Fate with the dark star
Be . . .

[*Enter* KURANO *at back*]

KURANO: Is the Court broken up?

THE YOUTH: Sir?

KURANO: Is the Court broken up? Are they dining?

THE YOUTH: One went there, my lord, to that room, and the other lords went there; but I do not know, my lord, I am not one of the household.

KURANO: Ah! [*Enter, back, two men, with white mattings, who cross to front and prepare the seppuku.*] Where is the Court

now? Can you tell me? [*The men do not answer.*] What is this? [*Enter* KAMEI.] Ah, here is Kamei. Is the Court over?

KAMEI: Yes, it is. Your friend, Asano, has done a mad thing.

KURANO: What?

KAMEI: He was mad, Kurano. He performed the ceremony like a madman and the people laughed. He drew his dirk and struck Kira in the face.

KURANO: Then Kira taught him the wrong ritual.

KAMEI: That is incredible.

KURANO: Things are, till they happen. What is being done?

KAMEI: I do not know. I have been ordered to go.

KURANO: Is he in arrest? Of course he is. Where is Kira?

KAMEI: Gone to have the wound dressed.

KURANO: Which way, though?

KAMEI: You cannot set upon Kira in his own house.

KURANO: He must set this right. You boy, where is Kira? I should have been here from the first: my wife's unhurt. I galloped to catch you, but the horse went lame. Which door, you, to Kira's rooms? Lord Kira's rooms?

THE YOUTH: One of these doors, my lord. I do not know which.

KURANO: Come, Kamei. We must find either Kira or the Envoy. Come. [*He goes to door at back, just as it is flung open. Enter the* ENVOY, SHODA, ASANO *under guard,* SAGISAKA, *and* NOBLES.] My lord, I beg for the privilege of a moment's speech with you.

THE ENVOY: I have a painful duty here, sir, which makes it impossible.

ASANO: I am condemned to kill myself, Kurano. I am going to death, now, for striking Kira.

KURANO: Good God! My lord, I protest against this sentence.

THE ENVOY: You protest?

ASANO: Kurano, do not ruin yourself for my sake.

A GUARD: Come, sir; stand aside.

ASANO: I am ruined and the estate confiscated; that is enough. Let the ruin end with me.

KURANO: My lord, I appeal. Any crime is sometimes justified, and I appeal now for my friend. The whole ritual was irregular, he was unattended, I was not with him.

THE ENVOY: He is condemned for sacrilege, Kurano.

KURANO: My lord, I know. But I know this man. He could not have committed sacrilege. I say that Kira wilfully taught him the wrong ritual to make him a mock; and that was the only sacrilege committed here, and in striking Kira he punished it. I claim a reversal of your sentence and judgment on Kira.

THE ENVOY: Arrest this man. No, no, loose him. Stand from him.

Have you any evidence to support your statement against Lord Kira?

KURANO: None, my lord. Only my knowledge of my friend and Kira's hate.

THE ENVOY: Sacrilege is a sin against the Divine; the question of human provocation does not apply. I am being very merciful to you, Lord Kurano, because I am an old man and know the value of life. Do not force me to remember that I have a peculiar power.

I uphold the sacredness of my master, and administer His law, as an old man soon to be judged himself.

Will you be silent here, in this place of death, or must I take order?

KURANO: Nothing that I say, or do, can save my friend?

THE ENVOY: Nothing.

KURANO: I have duties to the living, then. I will be silent, my lord.

ASANO: May I speak with him?

THE ENVOY: It is not usual to grant speech.

KURANO: It is not an usual case, my lord.

THE ENVOY: You may speak for one minute, then.

ASANO: Alone?

THE ENVOY: The minute has begun.

KURANO: My dear man.

ASANO: Well, Kurano, the gods make pawns of us.

KURANO: Kira taught you the wrong ritual?

ASANO: Yes.

KURANO: You will not go unavenged. And the confiscation? Who takes the land?

ASANO: It will go to the Crown, I fear. I pray Kira will not get it. I have played badly for those who trusted to me.

KURANO: This is the gambit only. What can I do for you or say for you?

ASANO: Nothing; I know you'll do everything. There is one thing——

KURANO: What?

ASANO: That woman whom I hoped to marry. No. She belongs to the past. I can think of nothing.

KURANO: There is no need where one loves.

ASANO: There are strange thoughts rising in me about the ways of the gods.

Kurano, one thing . . . about Kira. You spoke of vengeance . . . before that . . . Listen. Try to stop the confiscation.

THE ENVOY: The minute is past.

ASANO: Remember, Kurano, before all that . . . appeal . . . get the inheritance for my brother. Remember.

A GUARD: Come this way, Lord Kurano.

KURANO: I will remember. [*He is led off.*]

ASANO: Sometimes, in wintry springs,
Frost, on a midnight breath,
Comes to the cherry flowers
And blasts their prime;
So I, with all my powers
Unused on men or things,
Go down the wind to death,
And know no fruiting-time.

[*He kneels on the white mat and takes up the dirk*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE—*The outer scene*

A VOICE: Lord Asano is long at his honours. Is that he?

A VOICE: No, not yet.

VOICES: No. Hazama has gone up the road to see if he is coming. He must be here soon.

FIRST RONIN: The Envoy may have kept him.

A VOICE: There. There he comes. He is coming.

VOICES: Welcome home from your honours, Lord Asano.

SECOND RONIN: It is not he; not yet; but he cannot be long.

FIRST RONIN: Very often the Envoy keeps them.

VOICE: Whatever honour he wins they will not honour him as much as we do.

SECOND RONIN: He has been our guardian and our friend.

A VOICE: How long it seems.

FIRST RONIN: Sometimes the Envoy feasts them; in fact, usually.

A VOICE: Here is Hazama. He is coming.

VOICES: Asano, welcome!

VOICES. Where? Show me. I see Kurano.

VOICES: Welcome!

[*Enter* HAZAMA]

Welcome! Welcome!

HAZAMA: No, no! no, no! Hush!

VOICES: Asano!

HAZAMA: Quiet!

VOICES: Asano. Welcome! Welcome!

HAZAMA: Hush. Quiet! Still!

VOICES: Asano. Asano!

HAZAMA: It is not he, I tell you. It is Lord Kurano.

VOICES: Kurano! It is Kurano. Welcome. Kurano. Kurano! Carry him. We'll carry him home.

HAZAMA: Still, everybody!

VOICES: Here comes Kurano, etc.

[*Enter* KURANO]

HAZAMA: Here comes Lord Kurano. Welcome him home to us.

VOICES: Kurano. Welcome back to us, Lord Kurano!

KURANO: Stop this noise. Have this noise stopped, Azama.

VOICES: Kurano and Asano forever. Welcome! etc.

KURANO: Let them, for God's sake, stop. Silence, I say.

HAZAMA: Still, still! Still a moment!

VOICES: Friends forever. Our friends forever. Hush. Quiet.

KURANO: Come round me here.

VOICES: He has something to say.

THIRD RONIN: Would you taste our wine, lord?

HAZAMA: Wait till he has spoken.

KURANO: Kneel down.

HAZAMA: What is it, master?

KURANO: Your master Asano is dead.

HAZAMA: For God's sake, master!

VOICES: Dead? In God's name! Our master? What killed him?

A VOICE: What was it he said? I did not hear.

A VOICE: That our master Asano is dead.

FIFTH RONIN: O desolation!

FIRST RONIN: That death should happen like this, going to an honour!

HAZAMA: If I might ask it, master, how did he come by his end?

KURANO: By a knife.

FIRST RONIN: By an accident, then, was it?

KURANO: No.

THIRD RONIN: Was no one there? Did no one see?

KURANO: I saw. There were many looking on.

HAZAMA: Was he murdered?

KURANO: My friends, he was condemned to death. He killed himself.

ALL: Oh! Oh, God!

KURANO: This is the knife. This, here. This killed your master.

VOICES: Look, if there isn't his blessed blood on it. O Master Kurano! Poor soul. Poor blessed saint!

HAZAMA: My master that raised me, done to death like a thief!

KURANO: Done to death, by Kira. Goaded to it. Hounded to it till it passed bounds, when he struck Kira and was condemned.

HAZAMA: Kira is dead, then?

KURANO: No, alive; scarcely hurt.

HAZAMA: Then come, all of us, we'll burn him in his house.

KURANO: Wait. That could only be death. Kira has borrowed guards. His house is surrounded by them.

HAZAMA: We will wait till the guards are gone.

KURANO: You see this paper? You hold an Envoy sacred?

VOICES: Yes, indeed.

KURANO: This is an Envoy's decree. I am charged by the Envoy to read it to you. I will read it.

"These are to declare that anyone who endeavours in any way to avenge Lord Asano or to hinder the transfer of the estate will put himself without the law and will be punished by instant death, with confiscation of goods."

You see, nothing but ruin can come of any protest or act; nothing but death; and you are married men, with wives and children, or young men with parents to keep. If you lift a finger to avenge our friend, it can only wreck yourselves and them. You must submit.

VOICES: We had rather die. No, no! We will not submit.

KURANO: I knew him well; better than you. He was very dear to me. You have your wives and children to think of. You must remember those; they have a claim upon you. But to me, he comes first.

A VOICE: And to us, master.

KURANO: No, no! You must remember what I have read to you, and the ruin of your families.

VOICES: We're ruined as it is. Kira shall die. Die, now. Lead us against him, you.

We can never be in better state to avenge him.

KURANO: No, No! Wait. Before we deal with Kira we must fulfil Asano's dying wish.

VOICES: What was that, master?

KURANO: To save the estates for the rightful heir.
I can only appeal for that if you obey this edict. [*Murmurs.*] You must obey it.

VOICES: We will not.

KURANO: It is his last word to me.

VOICES: We must kill Kira.

KURANO: You cannot kill Kira. We may stop his getting these estates, which you may be sure he aims for. And there is another thing. A shameful thing. [*Murmurs.*] Our master is denied burial. [*Cries.*] He is sentenced to a criminal's grave. If we can stop the confiscation, we may remove that slur, too. Wait till these appeals are judged, before you think of revenge. But more news comes. . . .

[*Enter* FOURTH RONIN]

VOICES: Who is this? It's the widow's boy from up by the ford. What is it?

FOURTH RONIN: Lord Kurano.

KURANO: Yes. What?

FOURTH RONIN: Our Lord Asano is killed and all our land is to be Kira's.

KURANO: Yes.

FOURTH RONIN: Kira's guards are moving in from the valley-head already, to turn us out. Hundreds of them are coming. Look there, lord, you can see the flames. They have burnt my old mother's house. They have orders to burn every house and occupy the whole province. There are horse-

men with them, herding the stock; they are taking and destroying everything.

KURANO: It has begun, then.

FOURTH RONIN: They are going to scatter us so that we shall not avenge our master.

But that is nothing, Lord Kurano. I was in a barn, among the straw, and I heard the troopers talking. They are coming for you, they said, for you are the leader.

KURANO: Are they going to kill me?

FOURTH RONIN: They said they were going to make sure of you. They will kill you if you show a sign against them, Lord Kurano. I have run to beg you to hide.

KURANO: I will not hide. But you see now, you see how little hope there is.

But in the few moments left to us, before we are scattered, shall we not make a pact together, that we'll avenge our friend?

VOICES: Ay, we will. We will indeed.

KURANO: Let me trap no one. There will be no feasting in this fellowship; only a wandering in the cold, perhaps for months, and death at the end, according to this decree. Understand solemnly that the man who puts hand on mine marks himself for death.

VOICES: We will come, Lord Kurano.

VOICES: We know what the end will be.

VOICES: One has to pay a price in this world. We are ready to pay this, Lord Kurano.

KURANO: Come about me.

Here is the relic of our friend. Let us swear together, on this relic, to avenge his death.

VOICES: Yes, master.

KURANO: I speak, then, for each man here. I will avenge your death, Asano, lord and master, on the person of Kira Kots'ke, or die in the task, and to this I consecrate my life. Will you swear to this?

VOICES: I swear. I swear. So be it. I swear. I, too, swear. I make oath to this. I put my hand to this. May my name perish if I fail in this. I swear. I, too, swear. I vow this solemnly, Lord Asano. I swear, etc.

KURANO: Now swear, too, that you will avenge him only as I bid you, and when I bid you.

HAZAMA: You are our captain, Lord Kurano.

VOICES: We swear that we will obey you faithfully.

KURANO: Then it will not be, and must not be, till after the suits are heard.

All is done, then; but to say good-bye. We have no home here, henceforth; we are ronin and wanderers.

Scatter, now, through the province, wander and wait; that is all that we can do; his spies will be on us.

Now comes the bad time when you will be tried, and I have only one word to say to you: Endure. Endure all things, all things; lest we lose our revenge.

HAZAMA: And you, Lord Kurano, Kira will want to kill you.

KURANO: Yes, he will want to kill me.

HAZAMA: Will you stay here, lord, when his soldiers are coming? Come with us, master, for safety's sake.

KURANO: I have my own part to play here.

Dismiss, then. And believe nothing that men say of me.

But, I give you no hope, remember; nor any word but endure. Perhaps some day he will dismiss his guards . . . and then . . . justice may be done . . . if there is justice. Now go.

[*They go out, leaving him alone. The* GIRL *remains.*]

KURANO: What are you?

GIRL: Nobody.

KURANO: What is your name?

GIRL: Wild Cherry.

KURANO: What are you doing here?

GIRL: I came over for the feast.

KURANO: There will be no feast.

GIRL: I hate Kira.

KURANO: It is very wrong to hate people.

GIRL: You don't see them so close as I do.

KURANO: True.

GIRL: I like wine.

KURANO: There is plenty here. Drink.

GIRL: I like you.

KURANO: How old are you?

GIRL: Old enough.

KURANO: You ought to be with your lover, child.

GIRL: Ah! I've a lover, haven't I?

KURANO: Was your lover killed?

GIRL: Yes, Kira hanged him. I'd have been married but for that. Now I don't much care.
This yellow wine is nice.

KURANO: You good gods.

GIRL: You'll get past that stage. Was it a friend of yours that was killed?

KURANO: Yes.

GIRL: Was that through Kira?

KURANO: Yes.

GIRL: We ought to be friends, we two. You take it too seriously; I did at first. What is the use of sorrowing? It won't bring him back. Had your friend fair hair?

KURANO: No, girl; dark.

GIRL: Mine was fair. This was some of it. Of course, I'm the lowest of the low, but I've always kept some of it; then one doesn't feel so low.

KURANO: I shall kill Kira.

GIRL: I thought I would at first; but one cannot kill Kira. Besides, what is the use? It won't make it any better. Nothing makes it better, except wine. They do charge us for wine. You ought not to complain; you have all this for nothing.

KURANO: Give me some.

GIRL: I'll try some of the red.
I'm sorry about your friend. It makes one so savage and all the time one is so helpless. Here's a lady.

KURANO: It is my wife. Sit still. Give me some wine.

GIRL: Now I shall get beaten and then they'll fine me especially if my sash is torn.

KURANO: Hand me that bowl; thank you.

LADY K.: Kurano.

KURANO: What do you want with Kurano?

LADY K.: Who is this?

KURANO: My sister.

LADY K.: What has happened?

KURANO: Asano is killed.

LADY K.: I felt that it would end like that. Thank God, it was not you.

KURANO: Do not thank God yet. Why did you lie to me?

LADY K.: When did I lie to you?

KURANO: This morning. You lied and made others lie.

LADY K.: This is a strange language. I do not understand. What do you mean, Kurano?

KURANO: You sent word to me this morning that you had fallen on the steps?

LADY K.: I did fall.

KURANO: And that you were dying.

LADY K.: No. My message was simply "Come. Come quickly."

KURANO: The messenger said that you were dying.

LADY K.: I do not know what the messenger may have said.

KURANO: You scared the messenger.

LADY K.: He was concerned for me. Were not you?

KURANO: Too deeply—God!

LADY K.: What is the matter, Kurano? Why do you speak to me in this way?

KURANO: You were not hurt this morning?

LADY K.: I was hurt and shaken, and I am faint and sick still.

KURANO: Not to that point.

LADY K.: Will you not even ask me how I am?

KURANO: No.

LADY K.: Oh, you are cruel to me.

KURANO: Do you know that if you had not recalled me, I should have been with Asano to-day? And then all this would not have happened, and he would be alive now.

LADY K.: That is ignoring Fate. Who can measure causes and results?

KURANO: I can measure that.

LADY K.: Your place was beside your wife, Kurano.

KURANO: Only while my wife is worthy. No, do not weep, do not cry out; I know you. Your fall was a trick to keep me.

LADY K.: Can you think, after twenty years, that I should stoop to trick?

KURANO: Yes.

LADY K.: Is it not rather terrible to you that a woman should be forced to trick, after twenty years?

Listen, then. I did trick. I did it to save you. I knew where Asano was dragging you in his mad opposition to Kira. I knew that he would ruin himself and you, too, and that to-day would decide it. So I saved you, Kurano.

KURANO: And my friend lies down in the dust.

The blood runs along the ground and soaks in, and then the brain cannot think and the hand cannot do, and twenty years' work is a memory. You killed Asano and do not even know what he was.

LADY K.: I loved Asano. I loved your friendship with him. I know how you have worked together. I knew his nobleness. But I knew that if he were twenty times as noble he would still

not be worth your little finger. You are too generous, Kurano, where you love, and too blind.

KURANO: Asano is blind. [*He rises.*]

LADY K.: What are you going to do, Kurano?

KURANO: Drink.

LADY K.: Will you not take me home?

KURANO: I have no home. The "mad opposition" is over now; Kira is master here. Do you hear, you, who admired Kira so? Go and make your peace with him. I am going.

LADY K.: Where?

KURANO: Where beaten men go.

LADY K.: I am your wife, Kurano.

KURANO: You were.

LADY K.: I am your wife; more than that, I am your loving wife. Dear, I am all shaken and strange. Say a kind word to me. You will, I know you will; you would never do an unkind thing.

I know that I am nothing beside Asano; but now that he is dead, I could help a little. I want the world to know how noble and wonderful my husband is.

KURANO: Those are words; drink, and a dirk in the ribs, are my future.

LADY K.: Then I had better go and drown myself.

KURANO: It would be better.

LADY K.: Oh!

KURANO: I am giving you good advice. You're harmless, as women go, what is called virtuous, loving, wise. Go and drown yourself. Kira is coming. Asano was all that, yet it

ended in him killing himself. You virtuous are lost in such a world. Go drown or drink; then you'll be spared things.

LADY K.: That is not the language we have faced the world with these twenty years. Dear, do not drive me away like this. Let us face it together. I do not mind for myself, but you are lost somewhere and I want to be by you. You cannot put twenty years' life together so lightly aside. Think of our children and our times together. Dear, I beg you not to put me away. I am ill, dear, and faint, and I cannot bear this. We'll plan what we can do against Kira. This is so unfitting, it is breaking my heart.

KURANO: Drink this, then, and forget it; drink.

LADY K.: It is not a little thing that you are putting away, Kurano.

KURANO: I am thirsty, and I am weary of you; besides, this is my sister.

LADY K.: I will not interrupt you, Kurano. [*Exit.*]

GIRL: Was that really your wife?

KURANO: Yes, poor soul.

GIRL: You oughtn't to have driven her away, like that.

KURANO: Why, the thing has come to an end.

GIRL: Still, she hadn't hurt your friend, had she?

KURANO: She? No. It is twenty-one years, to a day, that we first joined hands. [*He covers his face.*] Now I shall not see her again. Stand up there, you, and tell me what you see?

GIRL: Nothing but the fields.

KURANO: Look along the road, towards Kira's country.

GIRL: Yes, there is something burning. It is moving.

KURANO: Those are torches. I thought he would be coming soon. It is Kira coming to take possession here.

GIRL: Is that beast coming here?

KURANO: Yes. Give me some more wine.

GIRL: I'm afraid.

KURANO: Drink. It is not so bad, this life of ours, while one has this. Can you dance?

GIRL: Not if Kira is coming here.

KURANO: I can dance. I've a good mind to try. I can dance stately dances and gay dances; and I can sing.

GIRL: Don't you anger Kira.

KURANO: I tell you I can sing. I'm going to sing.

GIRL: Don't, I say, don't. You don't know Kira. He is terrible. You take me away somewhere. It will be death if you stay here talking all this folly.

KURANO: Why do you make that noise when I say I'm going to sing? You have never heard me sing. The roses turn to me, when I sing. The birds in the air turn. There was a song I made when my friend came home; that was the friend who was killed. But I won't sing that, that was too sad; I want a merry song; for what is the use of being sad? Come you and sing.

GIRL: You are mad.

KURANO: Listen to me, now. Is not this well sung?

Fate with her changing tune
Keeps her appointed time,
Her ever breaking thread,
For ever spinning.
We, who are singing, soon
Will cease to rhyme,
Our moment will be sped. . . .

What comes next? Hark! Did you hear footsteps?

GIRL: It's the torches. Don't let them catch me here.

KURANO: Sit still and drink. Come here to me.

GIRL: No, I'm going, I'll not stay. You don't know what soldiers are.

KURANO: You are my dear and my delight and now we will sing together.

Yellow wine in a silver bowl
Is true contentment to the soul.
A dancing girl with brilliant eyes
Is true contentment to the wise.
O friends, rejoice, for man is meant—

[*Enter* KIRA's *guards with* SAGISAKA]

SAGISAKA: This is the man we have come to see.

KURANO: Who are you and what do you want? Let me finish my song.

To, what is it, man is meant?
To dance and sing and be content.

This is my sister. You haven't told me yet who you are.

SAGISAKA: Pay attention to all he says, Captain. You know me well enough.

KURANO: I do. You are Lord Kira's wife.

SAGISAKA: I——

KURANO: Are not you?

SAGISAKA: No, I am not.

KURANO: I get puzzled, seeing you so much together. This is very excellent wine.

SAGISAKA: I did not come to drink, Lord Kurano.

KURANO: It's the most innocent of the vices.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS: Is this the man?

SAGISAKA: Yes.

CAPTAIN: He seems a drunken fellow.

SAGISAKA: He is less drunken than he seems.

CAPTAIN: I am not sure. Come and drink, come and drink, my friend. There is nothing like drink.

KURANO: You're a reasonable being. It is the one friend. Here's one for you.
Is that your friend?

CAPTAIN: Yes.

KURANO: He is an ugly one.

CAPTAIN: He was kicked in the face by a mule when he was young.

KURANO: Do not make fun of me.

CAPTAIN: It is the truth; isn't it?

SAGISAKA: But now I do the kicking.

KURANO: I don't like you.

SAGISAKA: That's unfortunate, for you'll perhaps see a good deal of me in the near future.

KURANO: Shall we drink together?

SAGISAKA: No.

KURANO: Then if you won't drink you're a dog and an unbelieving dog and the mule shewed sense. What do you come here for, if not to drink?

CAPTAIN: Humour a drunkard.

SAGISAKA: I come to take over these estates, which are forfeited by that friend of yours.

KURANO: Is your friend Kira going to have them?

SAGISAKA: Yes.

KURANO: Is Kira in want of a man, for I shall be out of employment.

SAGISAKA: Kira does not employ drunkards.

KURANO: Who says I am a drunkard?

CAPTAIN: Never mind what my friend says. He does not know you.

KURANO: Do you dare to call me a drunkard?

SAGISAKA: I'll dare more than that, when this first month is over.

CAPTAIN: He calls you a gentleman.

KURANO: So I am a gentleman.

CAPTAIN: We are all gentlemen.

KURANO: Don't let him call me a drunkard then.

CAPTAIN: Come, we are all friends; and this is your sister. Is your name Cherry?

KURANO: Her name's my sister.

CAPTAIN: I had a sister like her once.

KURANO: Then you had more than you deserve.

CAPTAIN: I had. She cost me six months' pay.

KURANO: I like you. We shall be friends. Shall we make him drunk?

CAPTAIN: No, it would kill him.

KURANO: Never mind.

CAPTAIN: It would be difficult.

KURANO: No. We would throw him down and pour the wine down his throat. Shall we?

CAPTAIN: Yes. Yes.

KURANO: You take his heels.

GIRL: Yes.

KURANO: We will.

CAPTAIN: Yes, but wait a moment.

KURANO: No, not wait.

CAPTAIN: Yes; first let us all three be drunk.

KURANO: Roaring drunk?

CAPTAIN: Roaring and raging drunk.

KURANO: All be drunk.
I'll be drunk. You'll be drunk. She'll be drunk. We'll be drunk, you'll be drunk, he'll be drunk. We'll all be drunk. Let us see who'll be drunk first. Here's yours, here's yours. I don't want to be drunk, I want to dance. Kira is coming here, so we shall be friends, you and I will be friends.
You think I've been against Kira; I'm his best friend and your best friend, so let us dance.

SAGISAKA: You shall dance to-morrow.

KURANO: I want to dance now. My sister will dance with me.

GIRL: Oh, loose me, do! I'll get fined ever so if the stuff is rumpled.

KURANO: I tell you, we will dance. Come here. We will move those mats to one side. Are you coming to dance?

CAPTAIN: Yes; dance, yes, as soon as ever you have moved the mats.

KURANO: I like you. Are you a good dancer?

CAPTAIN: Not so good as you.

KURANO: I am a good dancer, am not I?

CAPTAIN: Excellent. Let me see you dance the sword dance.

KURANO: Shall we pour the wine on our heads first?

CAPTAIN: No, afterwards, when we are hot.

KURANO: But we will?

CAPTAIN: Yes. Oh yes.

KURANO: Yes, we will pour the wine cn our heads. We are going to pour the wine on our heads.

SAGISAKA: I would.

KURANO: [*To* GIRL.] I'll pour it on yours and then we'll dance. Sometimes I am sad, for all my merrymaking. It is not such an easy world. There is a fellow, Death, who is a danger, if one could find him. I had a friend once; my head is all in a whirl; a very dear friend; I could weep when I think what happened to him. It was Death who took him away. I would like to go to look for Death.

CAPTAIN: Your sister will bring you to him.

KURANO: Yes, so they say; all have told me that.

I will go look for Death, for Death is everywhere,
Putting his hands on friends and dulling women's hair.
Death took away my friend; and I have prayed for years,
But Death has paid no heed. Death does not yield to tears.

CAPTAIN: Death is like that.
You should drink again.

KURANO: There is no wine strong enough. But we will find him, some day.

SAGISAKA: He may be nearer than you think.

KURANO: You look like a friend of his. I have known wise, beautiful people; but Death did not care. [*To* GIRL.] We will go away, we two; I do not like these people; they think only of themselves. We, who have lost friends, are in another world.

We know how many miles the soul can tread,
We who go seeking signs from dear companions dead.

Come, girl, we'll go. Poor child, you are cold. We'll knock at the doors for shelter. [*Exit.*]

CAPTAIN: There is no doubt about him, poor fellow.

SAGISAKA: I am not so sure.

CAPTAIN: He is both drunk and mad.

SAGISAKA: I would like to see him sober.

CAPTAIN: I was sorry for him. This death of his friend has turned his brain.

SAGISAKA: It had better remain turned. Did you feel that he was drunk?

CAPTAIN: Yes.

SAGISAKA: And mad, you said?

CAPTAIN: Yes, both.

SAGISAKA: He is an object of pity, a martyr. He is dangerous, so.

CAPTAIN: He could be shut up, if he should become that.

SAGISAKA: That would make him still more a martyr.

CAPTAIN: What is he doing, now? I cannot see.

SAGISAKA: He'll come back. Captain.

CAPTAIN: Yes?

SAGISAKA: I believe he is pretending.

CAPTAIN: He pretends unusually well, then.

SAGISAKA: Captain, can you take a hint?

CAPTAIN: Yes.

SAGISAKA: He would be better out of the way.

CAPTAIN: I've no orders about that; that is life and death.

SAGISAKA: Kira would be grateful.

CAPTAIN: I've no means of knowing that.

SAGISAKA: I will answer for so much.

CAPTAIN: Do you order me to kill him?

SAGISAKA: Come, these are harsh words, Captain; "order" and "kill."

CAPTAIN: It's a harsh subject.

SAGISAKA: Supposing he were to talk in his cups, excitedly, provocatively. . . . Or rave against us . . . inciting to riot. . .

CAPTAIN: Well, what then? I could only arrest him for . . . being drunk . . . or out of his mind.

SAGISAKA: Of course. . . . What more could you do? You would arrest him.

CAPTAIN: That would not help you.

SAGISAKA: Supposing he were to resist arrest, to struggle with you, or to try to get away?

CAPTAIN: The guard would bind him.

SAGISAKA: If he were violent. One of them might . . . in self-defence?

CAPTAIN: I see what you mean.

SAGISAKA: Kira would not forget it.

CAPTAIN: You want him killed?

SAGISAKA: It would be easier with him away.

CAPTAIN: I see.

SAGISAKA: Kira is thinking of putting you in command here.

CAPTAIN: Ah!

SAGISAKA: Can I trust you to carry out Kira's wishes?

CAPTAIN: The man is only a madman. He is harmless.

SAGISAKA: Madmen are not harmless, and I do not believe that he is mad.

CAPTAIN: Drunken, then.

SAGISAKA: He is neither one nor the other. He is pretending.

CAPTAIN: If he is pretending, I will see to him.

SAGISAKA: You promise?

CAPTAIN: Yes, but that is not pretence. Watch him there as he comes.

SAGISAKA: I shall watch him very narrowly.

CAPTAIN: What is he saying?

SAGISAKA: Some folly. If I lift my hand like this, it will be a sign; and then you will kill him.

CAPTAIN: If he is pretending, yes; right; but this poor fellow is not pretending.

[*Enter* KURANO *with* GIRL]

KURANO: This is she. This is she who makes us mad. Look at her, she has driven me mad; it is in her eyes. It is bad when we are young, for then they smile, and we tear at the world's throat, and throw ourselves away, and all they want is vanity. If mirrors could speak, men would never be troubled by them. Look at her. All this beautiful bait to catch the little foolish fish in man.

It is beautiful, those eyes and the mouth, and all the curves, and the ears and the pretty teeth. Men have thought of these things going to death; thought of them with prayers. [*To* CAPTAIN.] Look at her. Is not she a beautiful thing? You've prayed to this in your time.

CAPTAIN: Ay, in my time.

KURANO: And you?

SAGISAKA: Kurano, leave off pretending that you are mad and listen to what I have to say to you.

KURANO: Do you believe in the gods?

SAGISAKA: I am not deceived, Kurano.

KURANO: If you believe in the gods you should be thankful.

SAGISAKA: Give heed, Captain. Why?

KURANO: Because your mother played false with a millstone.

CAPTAIN: What makes you think that?

KURANO: It may have been flints; but it was something hard; and so you were spared feelings. You were never driven mad by one of these things. You never will be; this does not stir you. Be glad; they are fatal things. When we grow up

they twine round us and fawn and purr and clog us to a standstill. They call themselves our mates. O heaven! that a thing so empty should have such power upon men. Do you see this head, how beautiful it is? Is not it wonderful, poised on the throat like that? Look how the flesh dimples, and then these shadows, and the red lips that the worm will eat, and these eyes that glitter so and tell her brain about us. Did you ever cut open such a head?

SAGISAKA: No; did you?

KURANO: With my mind. There was nothing there. I was puzzled at that.

SAGISAKA: Captain.

CAPTAIN: Do you know where you are, Kurano?

KURANO: Yes. At a very interesting point. I was saying that I was puzzled. Then I saw that these things are parasites, who suck their lives from ours. Our life gives them life. Our imaginations give them a mind, they have none of themselves. There is nothing in them. They are only shells and coffins where we bury our best thoughts. They turn them to dust and give back nothing. Why should we deceive ourselves about them? Can you tell me why?

CAPTAIN: It would take a wiser man than me to answer that.

KURANO: Yet you and that fellow there rule the world.

SAGISAKA: We will not wait for any more, Captain; this is not madness.

CAPTAIN: It is an odd kind of talk.

SAGISAKA: Kill him when he comes back to us. I will keep his attention.

CAPTAIN: It is not like mad to me, it is more like one of these frenzies.

SAGISAKA: Well, end it. Kill him.

CAPTAIN: I have half a mind. Kurano; do you see the house on fire?

KURANO: Do not. Do not. You are always interrupting. I am going to sing to you.

Once, very long ago,
When there was still the sun,
Before these times, before
The light was darkened,
One whom we used to know
Made life most noble; one
Who would have changed the world
Had people hearkened.

It was a dream. Perhaps
Time drugs the soul with dreams
To all but blind desire
For high attempt;
Then the intense string snaps;
The project seems
A hearth without a fire;
A madness dreamt.

SAGISAKA: I think that decides it. Now, Captain.

KURANO: [*To* SAGISAKA.] What can it decide? Do you think I blame you? You are stupid, you are vulgar, you play into life's hands. It is life that I blame, life is the enemy—life, who takes my friend and leaves you, the usurer, and you, the bully, and you, the doll. Come on then, for I will fight with life till I drag him from behind his veil. He is behind you and behind you and behind you and I will have him from his hiding-place. No, you shall not escape. I will have you. Out of my way. And you, the doll, the clog, to be left when my friend is taken. . . . [*He beats them with a cloak.*] No.

No. Forgive me. I am not settled in my wits. You had better give me wine. For I'm going to law, and must have my wits about me. Wine will steady me. I fill to you and to you and to you, and then I fill to myself. Then we will drink and fall asleep.

CAPTAIN: There can be no mistaking that.

SAGISAKA: I was wrong. He is mad.

CAPTAIN: A raving madman.

KURANO: [*To* GIRL.] We'll drink and sing:

Wine is a strong drink
Beauty is a stronger
Grief makes a man think
And makes the day longer.
So give a man beauty, and give a man wine,
And drink to your true love while I drink to mine.

[*Falls asleep on the ground, spilling the bowl*]

SAGISAKA: [*Kicking him.*] So much for Lord Kurano.

CAPTAIN: It is a pity. There was something in some of what he said. He has been a fine man; a soldier they said?

SAGISAKA: Yes.

CAPTAIN: We come to strange ruins. Perhaps he would be happier if I were to end him. Let sleepers be; sleep is better than nothing.

[*Enter* KIRA *with* HARIMA]

KIRA: What news of Kurano?

SAGISAKA: There.

HARIMA: Drunk?

SAGISAKA: Drunk and raving. His brain is turned.

KIRA: Turned? Are you sure he is not pretending?

CAPTAIN: He is not pretending, Lord Kira.

SAGISAKA: I suspected him, but this last has convinced me.

KIRA: It falls out luckily.

SAGISAKA: I was not sure . . . whether to kill him in any case.

KIRA: No, no, no; nothing of the sort.

SAGISAKA: He said something of going to law.

KIRA: Well, we must humour him. All else goes well?

SAGISAKA: All the men of the estate have scattered; this blow has destroyed them.

KIRA: A higher power has been in this. It is a mercy from above.

HARIMA: True.

KIRA: Come, we will celebrate this happy day fittingly; meanwhile let us give thanks at the temple.

[*Exeunt* KIRA, SAGISAKA, CAPTAIN]

HARIMA: [*Lingering.*] Sot and coward! Beast. You called yourself Asano's friend. Pah, you drunkard. May your own friends let you die so.

[*Kicks him and exit. A moment passes; a distant bell strikes.*]

KURANO: [*Rises.*] So there is mercy for the madman, none for the wise man, it seems. Now, you blind wolves, you shall see whether I have forgotten. Thus! Thus!

[*He tears his robes across*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE I.—*The outer scene.* THE HERALD. KURANO *in the background.*

THE HERALD

Comrades, imagine that a year has passed.
Asano's men have not avenged their lord.
They have been wanderers, houseless to the blast,
Keeping most bravely to their plighted word,
Biding revenge, until the Courts declare
Whether Asano's brother may be heir.

To-day the Judge has uttered his decree
That Lord Asano's castle fief and lands
Are forfeit to the Envoy and shall be
Given forever into Kira's hands;
For Kira's plans have thrived. The Court intends
To crown him Duke before to-morrow ends.

This news so fills the Ronin with despair
That seventy men desert Kurano's band,
Making all hope of vengeance empty air;
Since the remainder cannot hope to stand
Against the thousand guards in Kira's pay,
Kurano's planned revenge is swept away.

Here in the snow, alone with cruel thought,
He thinks of his dear comrade tricked to death,
Kira in pride and vengeance brought to naught,
And justice by decree made empty breath.
Friendship and justice, hate and vengeance fail;
Nothing remains, but love that cannot quail.

His son is coming, bringing bitter news;
Life has no pity on the men who lose.

[*Exit* HERALD]

[*Enter* CHIKARA]

KURANO: Chikara, is that you? Come, boy, I have news to tell you. We have lost the suit of the inheritance.

CHIKARA: I expected that, father. Kira is the law here now.

KURANO: Yes, he is. . . . But you are shaking; what makes you so white, boy?

CHIKARA: Nothing, father. Have you had good sales to-day, father?

KURANO: No, boy; none yet.

CHIKARA: Are you selling toys to-day, father?

KURANO: Not toys, dear lad; toys are luxuries. I sell vanities; they are necessaries. But you tremble like a leaf. . . . What is it?

CHIKARA: It must be the cold, father.

KURANO: You must have my old cloak, Chikara.

CHIKARA: Then you'll be cold.

KURANO: No, I am too hot. I have been excited. Let me put it well round you.

CHIKARA: Thank you, father. What has made you excited?

KURANO: Thoughts.

CHIKARA: Were you thinking what night it is, father?

KURANO: No, boy. What night is it?

CHIKARA: It is a year to-night since we left home. The men are meeting to-night. They mean to keep the year. Will you go, father?

KURANO: No, boy, I do not think to go.

CHIKARA: How strangely you answer, father.

KURANO: Do I? Well . . . my thoughts are strange.

CHIKARA: Father, may I say something?

KURANO: Yes, boy.

CHIKARA Will you give up the drinking and singing?

KURANO: Why, boy?

CHIKARA: Father, it cuts me to the quick to hear the men about you; they say you have forgotten our master.

KURANO: I have not done that, Chikara.

CHIKARA: I am sorry, father. Father.

KURANO: Yes?

CHIKARA: If Kira were to die, from some illness, should we all go back home and be knights, as we were before?

KURANO: If he were to die, boy; have you heard that he is ill?

CHIKARA: One hears all sorts of things, father, and fears all sorts of things.

KURANO: Kira is cunning; he would like us to fear all sorts of things. But what is the matter, dear lad? Your brow is burning. You are ill?

CHIKARA: I am not, father. I was only thinking, that if he were to fall ill and die, it would be a bad thing.

KURANO: Yes; that would be a bad thing.

CHIKARA: I think it would be terrible, father. [*He breaks down.*]

KURANO: Ah, boy, this is the world we used to read of together.

CHIKARA: Have you heard about mother, father?

KURANO: No, boy; never since.

CHIKARA: Father, I would give anything that you had not sent her away.

KURANO: My lad, we are not like other people, who can enjoy themselves. We were born knights, with duties.

CHIKARA: You know she has killed herself. She said there was a woman's way of being faithful. She would not keep you back?

KURANO: No, boy. She would not keep me back. She would not keep you back. So, she is dead. Chikara, my boy.

CHIKARA: Yes, father?

KURANO: Once a woman of our ancestors was defending a doorway with her husband against the enemy. She was shot in the breast with an arrow. She cried to her husband, "Never mind me. But use my body as a shield and keep the door." So he did.

CHIKARA: Was she killed, father?

KURANO: As far as such souls die she died.

CHIKARA: You never told me that tale before, father.

KURANO: No, we told gentle tales, in the evening bell-time. Did I ever tell you of Choryo?

CHIKARA: No, father. Who was he?

KURANO: A knight like us, lad. A lord killed Choryo's friend; it was Choryo's duty to avenge him. But the lord camped with his army, with soldiers all about him. Choryo was alone, but for his son.

CHIKARA: Did they do anything, father?

KURANO: They crept into the lord's camp at night, right up to his tent, through all the guards.

CHIKARA: Did they kill him?

KURANO: No, boy, they were caught, and put to death, like thieves.

CHIKARA: O father!

KURANO: That is why they are remembered, perhaps. They are in the stories.

CHIKARA: I believe you are making up these tales, father.

KURANO: I've been thinking in these last hours, boy. The world talks much about brotherhood; it is nothing to fatherhood. It is a proud thing to be a knight, and to have my son beside me.

Are not you very proud to wear a sword, Chikara?

CHIKARA: Yes, father.

KURANO: All the evil in the world is at the mercy of a sword.

CHIKARA: Why do they let Kira wear a sword, father?

KURANO: Evil can be very strong when knights forget their oaths.

Kira is to be made Duke to-morrow, and to have our lord's estates.

CHIKARA: Are we going to kill him then, father?

KURANO: No, boy; I am afraid not.

CHIKARA: Father, dear.

KURANO: Yes, my dear lad.

CHIKARA: The men say a terrible thing about you.

KURANO: What?

CHIKARA: That you care for the drink more than for fighting Kira.

KURANO: Yes; they may say that. Do you think that?

CHIKARA: No, father.

KURANO: Ah, lad, I've been trying to blind Kira. The drink was nothing but a blind.

CHIKARA: You have blinded the men, father.

KURANO: Does it make any difference?

CHIKARA: It makes all the difference.

KURANO: You are wrong, boy.

CHIKARA: If I am wrong, will you meet them to-night and tell them?

KURANO: How your voice rings, lad, and only last year you were playing at school. Do you remember?

CHIKARA: Yes, with old Daigaku.

KURANO: Now you are alone with me.
Listen, Chikara, there has been a break in the League; over seventy have left us. It is all over with the League.

CHIKARA: Yes, father.

KURANO: I cannot trust the others now. Our duty rests on us two. Do you understand?

CHIKARA: It is on us two, father.

KURANO: We must take desperate risks, like Choryo. Will you come, now?

CHIKARA: Where to, father?

KURANO: To Kira's palace.

CHIKARA: Yes, father.

KURANO: There will be many workmen about, getting ready for to-morrow, perhaps we shall be able to get in. Do you know Kira?

CHIKARA: No, father.

KURANO: He is a tall man, very noble-looking, with grey hair. He is restless and has quick eyes and a great voice. He is very glorious in his dress. But you will know him by one thing; he commands.

CHIKARA: Yes, father.

KURANO: If we get in, perhaps we shall only see, only spy out the land, see the guards.

CHIKARA: Yes, father.

KURANO: But Kira walks sometimes in the courtyard.

CHIKARA: Yes, father.

KURANO: There is a kind of god, boy.

CHIKARA: Yes, father.

KURANO: If we see Kira, if we get near him, keep my left side and back.

CHIKARA: I will, father, while I live.

KURANO: You are like your mother, boy. She was a very noble woman, Chikara. She told me strange things, once, long ago. Come, now. Sing as we go, lad.

CHIKARA: Sometimes, when guests have gone, the host
remembers
Sweet courteous things unsaid.
We two have talked our hearts out to the embers,
And now go hand in hand, down to the dead.

CURTAIN

[SCENE II.—*The* RONIN *grouped in the dark in the snow, moaning to themselves.*]

FIRST RONIN: Has Lord Kurano come?

SECOND RONIN: No.

FIRST RONIN: Are all the others here?

SECOND RONIN: All who are coming.

FIRST RONIN: Friends.

SECOND AND THIRD RONIN: Let our friend speak.

FIRST RONIN: Asano's men.

FOURTH AND FIFTH RONIN: Quiet! Quiet!

FIRST RONIN: This is the last meeting of our League. Our brotherhood of misery comes to an end. [*A moan passes over the crowd.*]

We have starved and wandered as Kurano bade. Each in his way we have all prepared for an attack on Kira, but today, as you know, three-fifths of our men have left us; all hope of revenge is gone. Our share in the preparations was to supply swords. Here they are, all that we have. We starved and begged and dug in the fields to buy them. We shall not want them now. So . . . let them lie. [*Flings them down.*]

SECOND RONIN: I and my fellows had an easier task. We had only to spy on Kira. We know Kira's palace as we knew ours. These plans are our share. But we shall not want them now. Lie there with the swords. [*Flings them down.*]

THIRD RONIN: It was our task to supply armour. This is what we made. We made it, after work, in the fields, in the cold nights, out of whatever we could get, broken metal and leather; rusty with the snow, too. Since it will not be used, no matter. Ground arms, with the rest.

FOURTH RONIN: Our band swore to get hooks and ladders in case we should scale Kira's palace. Here they are; the best we could get. Heap them down. We shall never climb by them.

FIFTH RONIN: I and my fellows made these lanterns in case we should make a night attack. They will not light us to any revenge. They may lie dark. [*Flings them down.*]

FIRST RONIN: We have been a year in the rice plots, as farmers' men.

SECOND RONIN: We have been joiners and beggars and fruit-sellers.

THIRD RONIN: We have been wanderers, glad of broken meats at the door.

FOURTH RONIN: We have been fishermen at sea.

FIFTH RONIN: We have been dogs in the kennels, outcasts.

FIRST RONIN: And whatever we have been, these things were made at the risk of our lives, when it was death by decree to plot revenge or speak revenge.

SECOND RONIN: We might have spared ourselves the pain.

FIRST RONIN: Not ourselves. Our wives and children might have been spared. My wife came to me, she had stabbed herself in the breast. She said: "You are a knight. You must avenge your lord, not think of women."

Her beauty died there.
My guest went from my fireside.
Our talk, our friendship,
Broken, unfinished,
The best things unsaid.

SECOND RONIN: I had no wife. I was to have been married before the ruin. But I had to think of my lord, not of marriage.

I never saw her again. The girl has gone now, ruined, too; and whether she is dead or in a teahouse I shall never know.

THIRD RONIN: I had no wife, nor lover, I am a widower. I had a little son. They told me he was lying on the flowers. I brought him in to the shed where we lived, we had no proper home. He had killed himself that I might be free to kill Kira. His little hands were clenched on the dirk.

FOURTH RONIN: My father and mother had a right to peace, after eighty years. But they were afraid that they might be a burden on me, while I had my duty to my lord to do. They killed themselves.

And all these lives go for nothing.

FIFTH RONIN: Those losses were beautiful, you can be proud of them. Kira brought other losses on me. I saw my children starved to death.

We lay on the reeds
In the marshy places.
They cried for food,
For the sweet cakes of old.
"Father, father,
I am so hungry!
May I have a rice-cake?
I have had no rice-cake
All to-day."

All around
Were the marshy places.
They cried for food,
Those sons of mine.
"Father," they said,
"Will it soon be food-time?
Can you feed us, father?"
I told them, "No."
And then they cried.

Kira it was,
The great Lord Kira,
Who burnt our home
And drove us forth.
It was his deed
That starved my children,
My little sons
In the wild swan's lair.

We cannot kill him,
We cannot harm him,
We cannot rob him
Of a moment's pleasure,
The unatoned blood
Cries unheeded.
We are poor men
Lost in the snow.

First Ronin: That is a true song, brother; we are lost indeed.

Second Ronin: Kira triumphs.

Fifth Ronin: He drinks with his dancing women, he is made Duke.

Third Ronin: He will be harsher to us now.

Fourth Ronin: I thought the gods checked pride, but evil like Kira's checks the gods.

First Ronin: Since all is useless, we will burn these things and dissolve the League.

Second Ronin: There is nothing else that we can do.

Third Ronin: Heap them together.

Fourth Ronin: Pour the oil upon them.

Fifth Ronin: These were the deserters' banners; they had better burn.

First Ronin: So, pile them, and good-bye to revenge. Would the deserters were burning with them!

Voices: Burn, with our hopes, to ashes, all is past,
The waiting in the snow,
The year-long pain,
The faith that equal justice falls at last.
We may depart, but not with hope again.
So burn, so perish, as the fire drives,
Our hope, our love, our service, all our lives.

[*Enter* Kurano *and* Chikara]

Voices: You come too late, Lord Kurano; you should have come before, we are disbanded.

Kurano: Not yet, not for a moment. There are things I wish to say to you. Tread out the fire. Come nearer.

First Ronin: What have you to say to us, Lord Kurano?

Second Ronin: You can say nothing, but that we are ruined while Kira is triumphant.

Kurano: I have just come from Kira's palace.

Third Ronin: What did you see there?

Kurano: Preparations for to-morrow; a muster of the guards.

First Ronin: What then?

Kurano: Kira came out.

Voices: Ah! the accursed!

Kurano: He had gifts for the guards for guarding him. This was in the courtyard. I was watching through the gates. The gates have been gilded for to-morrow, they are like gold. There were a thousand guards, in armour.

VOICES: We know their strength, too well.

KURANO: I had not seen them march before. They marched past Kira to salute, till the courtyard shook. They sang, too, rank after rank, a song in praise of Kira. "Aha, Aha, Kira." They came straight towards me; the dust in the court was like smoke.

They came straight to the gates. The gates were opened and they came through, horsemen and swordsmen, with fifes and banners. They still sang to Kira: "Bow down to Kira, to Kira the Duke." There were ten picked companies marching there. They thought I was a beggar at the gate, they flung money to me. They all came glittering out, singing their song about Kira in his glory.

When they had all come out, the gates were closed, and presently a little old man came out and locked them and a boy brought rice and flung it to the pigeons, and then it was sunset, and the gilders packed their tools and went home, and twilight came and a star, and they brought lanterns then and hung them in the courtyard so that one saw shadows, and they lit the cresset on the gate so that it was all wavering light.

Presently it began to snow, and the snow came down and down, but I stayed on by the gate in a kind of dream, for things came into my head about my friend, my friend Asano. He came into me here next my heart, talking to me. "Kurano, Kurano, and all my men of old time, fellowship goes on after death, dear brothers, in its struggle against wrong."

And I fell into a kind of dream about the Envoy, who is to make Kira Duke, being the man who condemned Asano a year ago; and I thought, "Yes, the Envoy is coming, and the palace is a sacred place and so Kira has dismissed his guards."

YELLS: What? What?

KURANO: He has dismissed them till to-morrow, and on this snowy night, he'll be unprepared, and

We can attack him if you will.

VOICES: Free? Free to attack him? The guards are gone. We can attack him.

KURANO: Yes, if you will. Will you?

VOICES: Very well; we will; to-night.

KURANO: Let us arm, then. Chikara, boy, we are going to die in a few hours. They are excited now, and will be, for a time, but it may pass. I look to you to help me to keep them thus.

CHIKARA: Very well, father.

THE RONIN: We are ready, Master Kurano.

KURANO: Now we will cast off our rags for death, and say our death-poems. This is the knife that killed our Master Asano. Let us consecrate ourselves to the washing of the blood away.

CHIKARA: I am the youngest, I will say my death-poem first: "Life is a banquet spread, but I cannot stay for the feast."

FIRST RONIN: I will say mine: "To-morrow I shall be under the grass, but to-night I am a man and on to-morrow's morrow men shall talk of me."

SECOND RONIN: I will say mine: "Young men often die for old men, it is the way of the world. I am an old man dying with young men in the young man's cause, and I am happy."

THIRD RONIN: I will say mine:

"We are outlaws, going to die like outlaws.
The flowers from our bones will be better laws."

FOURTH RONIN: I will say mine: "Brave men going to battle for our land will stop to lay flowers upon our graves."

KURANO: I will say mine: "Evil is very strong, but men who will give their lives are stronger."

Let us go out into the night.

First Ronin: We should have a banner, master.

Kurano: [*Raising the dagger.*] This is our banner. Play music. March!

[*They go out to a droning oboe and the slow tapping of a drum. They begin a pæan.*]

Curtain

Scene III.—*The inner scene.* Kira's *palace.* Sagisaka. Kira.

Sagisaka: Will you not rest, my lord? To-morrow's ritual will be long; you will be fatigued.

Kira: Honours do not fatigue. About those tenants near the stream. See them all turned out to-morrow, and their houses pulled down. I mean to dam the river there and make a fish-pond.

Sagisaka: If you made the fish-pond above, my lord, or shut them from the sea below . . . they would be forced out, without your sending a man.

Kira: That may have served in the old days. I am strong enough now for directer methods. Have you had any news of Kurano since his suits were heard?

Sagisaka: He has flung away his swords. He goes in rags like a beggar, they say; drunk in the kennel half his time; mad the rest.

Kira: Ah! My plan throve, you see. Asano's men have quarrelled. Their quarrelling so soon perhaps seems suspicious.

Sagisaka: I doubt their love for Asano; men hate philanthropists.

Kira: It might have been better to have watched them more closely.

Sagisaka: People so broken as Asano's will not be able to do much.

KIRA: I wonder if we were wise to dismiss the guards.

SAGISAKA: We should hear in time if there were any movement. We could recall the guards. They are only half a march away.

KIRA: True. Still. . . . It might be better.

SAGISAKA: I will write the order for them to return.

KIRA: Give me some wine, Sagisaka. [*Drinks.*] I will have up that woman from the village, the pretty one.

SAGISAKA: [*Writing.*] The one you saw this morning?

KIRA: The one with the broad brow.

SAGISAKA: You have an eye for them, my lord.

KIRA: She is here, I suppose?

SAGISAKA: I will send her.

KIRA: What is this?

SAGISAKA: The order for the guards; if you will sign it I will send a rider with it.

KIRA: Now? It must be midnight. Whom would you send?

SAGISAKA: A groom will take it.

KIRA: It is a bitter night; still snowing. Do you know if the horses have been roughed?

SAGISAKA: They were going to rough them to-morrow if the frost held.

KIRA: Send me the stableman to-morrow; the fool should have roughed them to-day.

SAGISAKA: We could rough one now if you would like the letter sent.

KIRA: It is spoiling six men's sleep for the sake of one man's folly. I will cast that man, and promote the other, the horse-breaker.

SAGISAKA: Very well, my lord.

KIRA: What are the women like, down at the fishery?

SAGISAKA: There's a girl I would like you to see.

KIRA: A girl, eh?

SAGISAKA: She's a bright little thing.

KIRA: I would like to see her to-night.

SAGISAKA: She cannot be here till to-morrow.

KIRA: I will have the other then, for now.

SAGISAKA: Here are the sweetmeats.

KIRA: Thank you, Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: I will tell the women to send her up.

KIRA: Yes. Good-night Sagisaka. Oh, Sagisaka.

SAGISAKA: My lord?

KIRA: Take notes of this, please.

SAGISAKA: Certainly, Lord Kira.

KIRA: To-morrow, before everything, send out to whom you can trust to find out about Asano's men, what they are doing and what parties they are in.

SAGISAKA: I will see to it myself. Is there anything else?

KIRA: We do not renew Nekko's bond.

SAGISAKA: He is counting on us.

KIRA: I cannot renew; the man's a fool. There was another thing . . . it has slipped my mind. . . . Oh, about Kurano.

SAGISAKA: Yes, Lord Kira?

KIRA: We will have him here, where he can live with some dignity; after all the man is a gentleman, nobly born. I do not like to think of him as he is.

SAGISAKA: It shall be done, my lord.

KIRA: You disapprove?

SAGISAKA: No, my lord. What was that?

KIRA: What?

SAGISAKA: I thought I heard a tapping.

KIRA: It was the snow. That window often rattles in bad weather.

SAGISAKA: It sounded more like a branch.

KIRA: The yellow plum-tree, no doubt; it needs cutting back. [*Drinks.*] Do not send the girl yet. I want to finish that problem of chess. [*He takes chessmen.*]

SAGISAKA: Very well, my lord. I will go, then.

KIRA: Good-night, Sagisaka. Open the window, as you go, the room's too hot. Is it still snowing?

SAGISAKA: A little. The moon's up. I'll leave the window. [*Passing* KIRA.] I believe you should move the knight, my lord.

KIRA: Nonsense, Sagisaka; look where the castle is.

SAGISAKA: Well, good-night, my lord.

KIRA: Good-night. [SAGISAKA *goes and re-enters.*] Well?

SAGISAKA: Shall I send that order to the guards?

KIRA: To-morrow will do.

SAGISAKA: It shall go at sunrise.

KIRA: Are you anxious? Do you feel that the guards ought to be here?

SAGISAKA: One feels safer with them.

KIRA: Ah, we are safe.

SAGISAKA: I hope so, my lord.

KIRA: I know so. What is to hurt us?

SAGISAKA: I don't know, my lord.

KIRA: Nor I.

SAGISAKA: I am sorry to have disturbed you, my lord.

KIRA: Wait. Is my servant outside?

SAGISAKA: He is just outside the door.

KIRA: He will call when I am ready. Go to rest now; we shall have a hard day to-morrow. [*Exit* SAGISAKA.] [*To himself.*] If I move the knight, the castle takes it. What other move can the knight have? Not there. There. No. The king must move. [*A packet is thrown in.*] [*Quoting.*]

"Earth to the king is but a chessboard laid,
With men and women waiting to be played."

[*A tapping.*] What is that? [*Goes to window.*] It rattles, yet the wind has fallen. [*Returning.*] What is this? [*Picks up packet.*] Did Sagisaka drop this? Was it thrown in? I cannot read it in this light. [*Comes forward to read.*] [*Reading.*] "Danger. Danger. Danger!" What danger? It is another of these madmen. Pah! [*Settling to his game.*] Now if I moved the pawn . . . the pawn is the key. . . .

A VOICE: Read it, Kira.

KIRA: What?

VOICE: Read it, Kira.

KIRA: Who said, "Read it, Kira?" [*Crossing to window.*] Can any one be in the courtyard? It is all bright moonlight. I heard a voice.

I am sure I heard a voice. [*Goes to door.*] Ono.

SERVANT: Yes, my lord?

KIRA: Did you hear a voice just then?

SERVANT: No, my lord.

KIRA: There was a voice calling my name.

SERVANT: I heard nothing, my lord. It has been all quiet in the house.

KIRA: No one has been to the door?

SERVANT: No one, my lord.

KIRA: Do you see any tracks in the snow there?

SERVANT: It is all white, untrodden snow, my lord.

KIRA: Send two of the men round with lanterns to make sure.

SERVANT: Very good, my lord. Shall I bar the window, my lord?

KIRA: Yes, close the window; then go. [*Exit* SERVANT.] Strange. There was a voice. I am well; am I well? What am I to read? [*Opens and reads.*] "You are to be killed to-night. Hide. Hide." I am weary of these warnings. I will have them ended. It is strange that they still come. To-morrow I will root out those Asano people. [*Writes.*] There. There. Then these warnings will end. [*The little god on the bracket at the back of the stage falls and breaks.*] What was that?

[ONO *enters*]

ONO: Are you hurt, my lord?

KIRA: No. This fell.

ONO: May the gods turn it to our good. What made it fall?

KIRA: The support was rotten, look. It is broken to pieces.

ONO: May the gods have pity on us!

KIRA: Why do you say that? You are trembling.

ONO: This is the god of this house and it is broken.

KIRA: It is a piece of baked clay which fell on to a piece of stone.

ONO: It is your god and it is broken.

KIRA: And what do you think that means?

ONO: May the gods prevent it being so!

KIRA: What does it mean?

ONO: That your luck is passing.

KIRA: So it is, Ono. Lord Kira is passing. To-morrow he becomes Duke and Overlord. To-morrow, did I say? No, to-day. What time is it?

ONO: On the stroke of twelve, my lord.

KIRA: Did the watchmen find anything?

ONO: Nothing, my lord, all was quiet, but for one thing.

KIRA: What was that?

ONO: The dogs were howling.

KIRA: They were baying the moon.

ONO: No, my lord.

KIRA: Then it is the frost; their drink is frozen.

ONO: They were baying at something in the air.

KIRA: What?

ONO: Something over the house; a bird that was flying away.

KIRA: It was an owl like yourself, Ono. Take these orders. They are to be in the Captain's hands by noon to-morrow. Is that woman ready?

ONO: Yes, my lord.

KIRA: Go down with those orders and then send her up. [*Exit* ONO.] [*Picking up the shards.*] You have watched out your time. You have been with me since the beginning. Now we shall have a new one. A famous artist will make one all of gold, for Duke Kira. It will watch me go on, from power to power, Duke Kira, Prince Kira.

Prince Kira. [*Drinks.*] Why not?

[*The door opens and a woman appears*]

You are the Starblossom?

WOMAN: Yes, lord.

KIRA: Will you not put off that veil?

WOMAN: No, lord.

KIRA: Let me help you.

WOMAN: No.

KIRA: Do not shrink from me. I hear you have a very beautiful voice, a thrilling voice. These sweetmeats are to the voice. Will you not sing to me?

WOMAN: I cannot sing.

KIRA: Here is the viol. I am sure that you will play to me.

WOMAN: I am terrified, terrified.

KIRA: Take this viol, now, and let me hear your voice. You will spoil your singing if you are terrified. Look at these pearls,

every word that you utter is a pearl: these shall be yours for one song. Your voice is cool and white: it is as beautiful as these pearls. There is the hand, now, on the strings: a touch and music comes. Sing me some song that means very much to you, some gentle song like your voice, a delicate song, like a touch upon the heart. You have suffered, to have such a voice; you have had a sorrow.

WOMAN: Yes, Lord Kira.

KIRA: Sing to me of that, if it is not too great a pain.

WOMAN: Are you Lord Kira?

KIRA: Yes.

WOMAN: They told me you were a devil.

KIRA: You see that they were wrong. Please tell me of yourself. Sing me this song of yourself.

WOMAN: It is not so very beautiful; but it is common enough.

KIRA: It will be human, then, if it is common.

WOMAN: It is human, if sorrow is human.

Queens long ago
Knew sorrowful days,
Seeing their husbands killed,
Their sons destroyed.
Death makes the full heart void,
The cold heart filled,
Those women knew Death's ways,
I also know.

Father and mother gone,
He whom I loved, and now
My sons, my lovely sons,
My three bright boys

Killed, while the sunlight shone,
And blossom filled the bough;
I was so happy once
But Death destroys.

Yet, although Death is great,
Earth's many million tears
Move on the heart of things
Quickening a change to be;
And drop by drop the sea
Moans from its springs,
Its cry will reach God's ears;
Man has not long to wait.
Death is but tool to Fate.

The cup is brimmed in time and then it spills over.

KIRA: You are young to have sorrowed so.

WOMAN: There are younger ones who have sorrowed worse. If you knew what goes on in this land of yours, Lord Kira.

KIRA: You were beautiful when you said that.

WOMAN: Was I?

KIRA: Very. Listen, will you tell me more, tell me of what goes on in this land of mine?

WOMAN: You do not want to hear.

KIRA: From you, I do. There is another thing I want to hear from you. [*The oboe and the drum far off.*]

WOMAN: Hark!

KIRA: You will not put me away like that, Starblossom.

WOMAN: There was a noise. There it is again.

KIRA: We will not mind the noise. I want to hear the music of your voice, saying something.

WOMAN: No, no, no!

KIRA: Say something sweet, Starblossom. What a beautiful name, it is beautiful like your voice. Will you say this thing, Starblossom, the little sweet word, while I hold your hands like this, and look into your beautiful eyes? [*The music loud, and voices.*]

WOMAN: What is it that I must say, Lord Kira?

KIRA: That you love me, Starblossom. How you tremble, little flower; how white you are!

THE PÆAN OF THE RONIN

The time dragged by till our hearts were broken,
The time dragged by till we cursed the sun;
Now the hour has struck and the word is spoken.
The time is fallen and the deed begun.

Asano. Asano. Over the wall with the banner.

KIRA: What do they say?

WOMAN: It sounds like rejoicing.

KIRA: Ah, yes. To-day I receive the Dukedom.

WOMAN: They are coming to cheer you.

A VOICE: Kira's men. Help me, Kira's men. Help me, I'm alone.

A VOICE: Guard the great gates. Shoot at the roof.

WOMAN: You must show yourself to them.

KIRA: You have not said that you love me yet.

WOMAN: Do you want me to?

KIRA: Yes, Starblossom.

WOMAN: You have not shewn that you love me.

KIRA: I will shew you, Starblossom.

WOMAN: [*Flinging.*] Fetch me my comb.

KIRA: These pearls will serve instead. [*Clasps pearls about her throat.*] Now you are prisoner, beautiful Starblossom.

A VOICE: I cannot. Look! They are all sticking in me.

A VOICE: O, I am killed . . . killed!

A VOICE: Die, you! Where is he? [*The Pæan in snatches.*]

WOMAN: Get away. Listen! Oh, what was that?

KIRA: What! What is this, then? [*Strikes gong.*]

WOMAN: They are fighting.

KIRA: [*Going to door.*] Where is Ono? Ono!

A VOICE: We are coming, Master Asano.

WOMAN: It is Kurano and his men, O God!

KIRA: Quiet, woman! I must think.

[*Enter* SAGISAKA]

SAGISAKA: Run, my lord. Get out of the house. It is Kurano. Run. Go, man. They've surprised us. Hide. Run. Go, you girl. Run.

KIRA: Yes.

[*Drops his white cloak and runs to the door right.* SAGISAKA *hides behind the door. The girl flies door left.*]

SAGISAKA: Can I get that knife before they come?

[*Crawls out, listens, and crawls back*]

KURANO: He cannot have escaped.

HAZAMA: I have looked. He was not there.

First Ronin: None of us is much hurt. They made a good stand in the courtyard.

Kurano: You're cut about. Hara. Bind his head, Kodera. Come in here. He may be here. Come carefully. [*They enter.*]

Hazama: He is not here. This is a living-room.

Second Ronin: We have come the wrong way. Go back, master.

First Ronin: There is his wine. He is not here. He has got away.

Hazama: I believe he has. Let us waste no time here. Come, quickly.

Kurano: Wait. What is this wrapping?

First Ronin: A cloak. Some of their clothes.

Kurano: It is his cloak. Look at the purple edge.

Hazama: Master, we have not searched the stables. He may have taken horse by this. Run, you.

Kurano: Wait. This cloak is warm. He must be near. He must have been here within the minute. Come. We'll search this way.

Sagisaka: [*Springing out.*] Not yet. [*He sends* Chikara *reeling.*]

Hazama: Ah, cockerel. [*Stabs him. The others go past.*]

Sagisaka: I have got . . . one of you. [*Falls.*] Tell the trumpeter . . . tell the trumpeter . . . tell the trumpeter . . . to call . . . the call. [*Dies.*]

Hazama: They have him. [*Goes to door.*] Come this way, you Ronin. Come this way, Asano's men. Kira is taken.

[*A shout of joy. The* Ronin *flock in and line back of stage.* Kurano *and the others bring in* Kira.]

KURANO: Take that body aside. [SAGISAKA *is drawn aside.*] Be quiet, please. Duke Kira, Overlord of this Province, Knight of the Sacred Presence, Chieftain of the Captains, Supreme Counsellor. We are the friends and servants of Lord Asano, who was done to death by you, a year ago. We come before you with a message from our beloved master and friend. [*He displays the dagger.*] We cannot rest till our master is avenged. We have the honour, Duke Kira, to request you to kill yourself, with this knife, duly prepared.

[*He kneels and offers the dagger. A long pause*]

THE RONIN: [*Kneeling.*] We have the honour, Duke Kira, to request you to kill yourself. [*A pause.*]

KURANO: Duke Kira, in the name of our beloved master, and friend, we request you to kill yourself. [*A long pause. Drawing his sword.*] Justice must be done, then.

CURTAIN

SCENE IV.—*The outer scene*

KURANO: Come this way. Come this way. It is but a little way. The word has gone to the Envoy. The order will come in a few minutes.

This is the grave. This is the holy place. We are all anointed and ready. We have kept faith this night, and it will soon be morning. Look, our lanterns are dim, and there is all the dew on the grass. This is Asano's grave. This little green heap where the little flowers grow. So now we have come here. Oh, the joy of being able to come! We are the happy faithful and the birds are beginning.

My beloved man, whom I knew, our master and friend, lying here under the grass, we come here on our knees, to say that we have kept faith. We have broken the chain and spilled the cup. He is dead, Asano.

Asano, beloved master, we offer you back this knife.

It was stained when you left it with us. We have cleansed the stain.

Take it from us, Master Asano, with our love and with our lives.

THE RONIN: Gladly given, Master Asano. [*A trumpet winds.*]

KURANO: Now I receive the herald who will bid us come to you, Asano, in whatever windy place the dead know, to be with you forever. [*A trumpet winds.*]

[*The* HERALD *enters*]

THE HERALD: Kurano and the retainers of Asano Takumi no Kami.

KURANO: We are here.

THE HERALD: I have a message for you.

That you are to kill yourselves here, on this spot for the murder of Duke Kira. [*He presents the order.*]

KURANO: We accept the order. You shall witness our obedience to it.

THE HERALD: I salute you, faithful ones.

KURANO: You trumpeters, who call the faithful to death in all the armies of the world, blow a long point.

That long-dead heroes
Manning the ramparts of God
May hear us coming,
Baring our hearts to the sword
For him we loved so.

CURTAIN

MELLONEY HOLTSPUR

OR

THE PANGS OF LOVE

The consecrated things are wiser than our virtue.

MELLONEY HOLTSPUR

PERSONS

Kezia Spinfield
Bertha Parkins
The Man in Armour
Melloney Holtspur
Myrtle West
Lonny Copshrews
Jake Holtspur
Minnie Bracknell
Aline Copshrews
Lady Mento
Bunny Mento
Jemima Jones
Peter Jones
Susan Jones
Maria Jones
Lenda Copshrews
Spirits

MELLONEY HOLTSPUR

OR

THE PANGS OF LOVE

ACT I

[*The scene is a panelled room. At Back, a plain panelled wall with two windows Right and Left. Right at back Center is a figure of a man in fifteenth century plate armour. Directly above the man in armour, let into the panelling of the wall, is the Holtspur device in a Renaissance high relief of coloured plaster: a cock holding a spur, with a motto, In asperis spero. The windows are on each side of this figure. On the Left of the man in armour, hung on the panel, is a portrait of* MELLONEY HOLTSPUR. *On the Right of the figure, balancing it, is a portrait of* LAURENCE COPSHREWS. *At extreme Right Back is a dark doorway leading off.*

On the Right wing there is panelling as at Back, no decorations. Up stage on this side is a passage leading off.

On the Left wing, panelling as at Back and Right, with a fireplace and mantel in the centre of the set.

Both above and below the fireplace on this side is a passage leading off.

In the Centre of the stage is a small, oak refectory table, on which is a book bound in calf. Ink, pens and notepaper lie to right of the book.

To Right of stage is a small table with chairs.

KEZIA SPINFIELD *and* BETHIA PARKINS *are arranging the scene.* BETHIA *is dumpy and dowdy and old.* KEZIA *is taller and smarter and older, with a frail face of some beauty.* BETHIA *enters Left with a tray and is taking it out to the passage Right.*]

KEZIA: No, not there, Bethia. Lady Mento said, "Leave it in the hall." I'll pull the little table out. [*She goes off Right,*

then returns, pulling a little wheeled table to Right of stage.] Now put it there. [*Bethia puts down the tray.*]

BETHIA: It's very late, Kezia; I declare it's nearly twelve.

KEZIA: Just let me see if I've forgotten nothing.

BETHIA: There's the note from the Mrs. Trenchard who is dying.

KEZIA: Yes. Lady Mento must have that directly she comes in. Now I will count. The soup, the biscuits, the coffee, the apple for Mr. Bunny, the salted almonds for her ladyship, the water; cups, spoons.

BETHIA: What time will they be back from this dance, Kezia?

KEZIA: Between two and three, I heard them say, but I daresay they'll be later. Miss Copshrews is to be there.

BETHIA: The young lady who is coming here to-morrow?

KEZIA: Miss Lenda Copshrews. She's stopping at Windlesham with Sir Alfred and Lady Jones, and she'll come on from there to-morrow with the four Jones children.

BETHIA: I noticed Master Bunny was very particular about himself.

KEZIA: He has been very particular about himself these nine weeks, ever since he met her first, at Wrocester Hunt Ball.

BETHIA: Have you ever seen her, Kezia?

KEZIA: Yes; often, as a baby. She was brought up at the Rectory here, by her grandfather, old Mr. Copshrews, who was the Rector here twenty odd years ago. They left when they made him Dean of Wrocester and I have not seen her since. That's her photograph, grown up, on Master Bunny's desk.

BETHIA: Twenty odd years soon pass: yet they make a cruel difference.

KEZIA: You only came into the family through her ladyship's husband. You've been with the Mentos all your life. But I've been here among the Holtspurs for sixty-five years, Bethia Parkins. Twenty odd years ago this house was a very different house from what it is now. Old Mr. Jake Holtspur, her ladyship's father, was alive then. He used to say that no man ever left this house as sober as he entered it; and it was true, too, Bethia. Drink and paintings were the only things he cared for. But he had a grand brain, old Mr. Jake; until her ladyship married.

My lamb, Miss Melloney was alive then. She was his youngest, but he never cared for her.

Twenty odd years ago, she would be singing her French song here, and old Mr. Jake drinking with his friends, and money everywhere, and my love alive.

BETHIA: But who was this Miss Copshrews' father, Kezia?

KEZIA: The Rector's son, Mr. Laurence Copshrews. He was a painter.

BETHIA: What makes you look about you like that, Kezia Spinfield?

KEZIA: I don't like talking of Mr. Laurence Copshrews. He was a live, blind brand of hell. And there's some of him present in this room. That portrait, there, with the green baize screen on it, is Mr. Laurence Copshrews. He painted that.

BETHIA: I'd thought that was her ladyship's brother. He doesn't look such a villain, Kezia. He looks to me to be a handsome young man.

KEZIA: Others thought so, more's the pity.

BETHIA: Was this Miss Lenda Copshrews born in sin, then, Kezia?

KEZIA: No. He married a French singing-woman. Miss

Lenda was their only child. But draw the green baize, Bethia. I don't like to feel him looking at me.

BETHIA: Why are these two pictures covered with baize, Kezia?

KEZIA: They are said to be very delicate pictures that must not have the sun on them. And they are very valuable. Old Mr. Jake thought the world of them. He bought several others of Mr. Copshrews' paintings.

BETHIA: [*Moving to portrait Left.*] Then this is by Mr. Copshrews, too, Kezia? And who might this be?

KEZIA: That is my lamb, Miss Melloney, whom he painted. I entered service here the day she was born. The day she died was the bitterest day I've known on this earth. It is long ago now, but I cannot bear the thought of it.

BETHIA: It is a sweet face, poor soul. Is it like her?

KEZIA: She was like that: only she had a way with her: a little merry way, that nobody could paint.

BETHIA: And she was never married?

KEZIA: No. Many asked her. Sir Alfred, the father of the little Joneses who are coming, was the one I hoped. But she was not for this world. There was another, better painting of her than this, by Mr. Copshrews, but it was burnt in the fire we had here in Mr. Holtspur's study, just after Mr. Holtspur died.

BETHIA: I heard there was a fire.

KEZIA: A very mysterious fire. To this day no one can understand how it broke out. And there was something about that fire which marked it as a judgment.

BETHIA: What could it have been a judgment for?

KEZIA: A loving of idols, Bethia. That man's paintings were singled out by the fire; they were the only things burned, beside the mantel.

Now Heaven defend me!

BETHIA: Whatever is it, Kezia?

KEZIA: Why didn't you draw the green baize curtain when I asked you?

BETHIA: But you can draw it, Kezia; you're nearer to it than I. Such a fuss about a curtain!

KEZIA: It is a fuss about a curtain, but cover his face, do you now.

BETHIA: Why, save us, Kezia Spinfield, you look as though you'd seen a ghost. There's his face covered. A handsome young man with plenty of go in him. I never saw you in such a taking, and all about a graven image!

KEZIA: I could tell you something about that graven image, as you call it, that would bring the sweat upon your palms for fear.

BETHIA: And what might that be, Kezia?

KEZIA: If I tell you, will you promise never to breathe what I tell you to anyone?

BETHIA: I will not tell. I promise that.

KEZIA: I would not tell you or anyone but for other things. You know that signs come, to those about to die?

BETHIA: They say they do not come as they used to come. Who, here, have signs been coming to?

KEZIA: They have been coming to me, Bethia, in these last nights, and so I know that I'm not long for this world. First the death-watch, but that I paid little heed to, since there are

many dying, up and down; but then, two nights ago, there was the night-cock, crowing till the rafters rang, and all a-glimmer in the air; so then I said, "If there comes another sign, I shall know it is for me." And last night the Rider came. He came clop clep, clop clep, just at midnight, and stopped just below, in the road. I could see him there, Bethia, a rider on a white horse, with a led horse at his side. It was full moon, Bethia, and he looked at me and nodded. So I shan't see the swallows go that are now come, nor the fruit that is now blossom, but I shall be with my lovely Miss Melloney, Bethia, where blossom will never fade nor fruit fail.

BETHIA: It's a blessed thing to be so ready, Kezia Spinfield.

KEZIA: After ten times seven
Man is ready for Heaven,
And after ten times eight
He does not want to wait.

And now I will tell you what it is that troubles me about that picture, if it be a picture.

BETHIA: What else could it be, Kezia, my good soul?

KEZIA: A sending, from him in hell, to damn folk. Didn't I see it bewitch you a moment ago, just as he would have bewitched you in life? There is this about the picture, Bethia. Every night, when her ladyship has gone to bed, I creep down here with a long stick, and I push the curtain over him, with the stick, so as to shut him up, so that he shan't get out.

BETHIA: This it is to live and learn!

KEZIA: And every morning, Bethia Parkins, when I come down, the curtain is drawn back, so that his wicked face is free.

BETHIA: Every morning?

KEZIA: For the last nine weeks. Ever since Master Bunny met his daughter.

BETHIA: Kezia!

KEZIA: It's drawn right back. He's opened his door and got out, and who knows what wickedness he's done!

BETHIA: But he's dead, Kezia; he's dead and gone.

KEZIA: So are a many dead and gone that work evil. I've signed that curtain with blessed water from the font, but he's stronger than the sign.

BETHIA: Mightn't it be that new maid, Parsons, when she dusts the room, first thing? She might draw the curtain to look at him.

KEZIA: It's none of the maids, Bethia.

BETHIA: It might be her ladyship or Master Bunny, Kezia. Master Bunny's taken up with painting and that. And he's up and about at all hours.

KEZIA: It's not them. I've taken my Bible into the corner there and left the light burning and watched.

BETHIA: What did you see, then, Kezia?

KEZIA: At first I saw nothing and heard nothing, and I fell into a doze, in spite of myself. But I was waked by a great clang, like the trump of doom.

BETHIA: What was it? Had something fallen?

KEZIA: What was there to fall?

BETHIA: A picture, perhaps, or a window blown open, or a log burned through in the hearth, or one of the fire-irons falling, or a draught knocking down a vase of flowers, or a dead bough outside, falling from one of the trees.

KEZIA: This was none of those. It was a clang like iron, and it called with a voice, and it seemed to come from Sir Tirrold Holtspur, the man in armour there.

BETHIA: Did you hear what it said?

KEZIA: As sure as I stand here, it cried, "Another day is dead!" And another day was dead, Bethia, for I could hear the church bells, that chime every third hour, chiming for midnight. "The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended."

BETHIA: Kezia, I suppose Sir Tirrold Holtspur isn't in the armour? There's no man in the armour?

KEZIA: No, indeed, it's only like his suit of clothes.

BETHIA: I've heard of men being in the armour, and unable to rest. Who was this Sir Tirrold?

KEZIA: The founder of the family, they say. He was in the Wars of the Roses, at the Battle here. But whatever the voice was, Bethia, it was after the voice that the thing came.

BETHIA: What thing?

KEZIA: I don't know, but something came into the room from over there. [*Points to Right Back.*] Something unhappy.

BETHIA: But you saw it? What did it look like?

KEZIA: No, I didn't see it. I felt it. And it came quite near, and it saw me and didn't mind me; it was friendly to me, though I was terrified of it.

BETHIA: What was it, do you suppose?

KEZIA: Lord, save us, Bethia, I believe it was he, out of the picture!

BETHIA: The hallows be good to us!

KEZIA: I'm sure it was, for, after a little, I felt it go over to the picture there; and as sure as I stand here, it drew back the curtain and looked at Miss Melloney. Then, after a minute, it went over to his portrait, and I saw the curtain travel back from it. The rings clinked and the baize moved.

BETHIA: And what happened then, Kezia?

KEZIA: I believe it went into the picture, like a spider going into his den. That was its home; there it stayed, looking out. And I was weak with terror. I backed out and away, holding my Bible against it. I've prayed for him since, Bethia, that he might find peace. But he is too strong. And he is evil to this house.

BETHIA: You of the Holtspurs take things to heart too much. Why is he evil to this house?

KEZIA: He brought death here.

BETHIA: Whose death?

KEZIA: We'll be going to our rests, Bethia.

BETHIA: You mean your Miss Melloney in the picture?

KEZIA: I mean all whom ever he touched.

BETHIA: How did he bring death to your Miss Melloney?

KEZIA: How does any Judas bring death? [BETHIA *nods.*] And now to-morrow his daughter will bring death to Master Bunny.

BETHIA: No, no, Kezia. Her ladyship will save Master Bunny, if it be a case of saving.

KEZIA: She'll snare mother and son as he snared father and daughter. He brought death in his touch and so will she.

BETHIA: She was all in all to you, your Miss Melloney. [KEZIA *nods.*] And she died, of a kiss.

KEZIA: No matter how she died.

BETHIA: When it is all summed, when we come to our ends, we women, we had rather have that than the nothing some of us have.

KEZIA: Maybe, woman. I had a love once, withered as I am. He could not marry me. He had to tend his old mother, and died before her.

BETHIA: I never had that. I'd nothing.

KEZIA: Nothing?

BETHIA: There was one I used to watch for, riding by; but he never knew. He was killed in the Egypt War. I could have died, of a kiss.

KEZIA: At this moment, at the dance, Master Bunny would die for one. May them of this house guard their own, from the evil here and evil coming. Amen. Give me your arm, woman. Since my Miss Melloney died it's been an uphill road with me; but there's rest from it all at the end. [*They go out, Left. After a minute's delay, a clock, off to the Right, strikes twelve, and chimes. The figure of* SIR TIRROLD HOLTSPUR *cries, "Another Day is Dead!"*

[*The room is quite dark, except for the moonlight that comes in from the windows over the portraits. As these have scutcheons in them, the light on the floor has colour in it.*

The ghost of MELLONEY HOLTSPUR *is seen moving silently on to the stage from the door down stage Left. She is in white, and is crying silently. She moves gropingly to the centre of the stage.*]

MELLONEY HOLTSPUR: I am Melloney Holtspur, the last of old Jake Holtspur's daughters. I cannot rest. [*She comes down.*] I died, in the room above this, eighteen years ago. There were three of us girls; Hester, and Julia, and I. Hester married. Julia married. I did not marry anyone. Julia Mento has this old house now; she with her boy, Bunny, whom I love.

Twenty-two years ago at Easter time! Twenty-two years ago, two hundred and sixty-four months, eleven hundred and forty-four weeks, what a lot of days, what a lot of nights, unable to rest! [*Calls.*]

Lonny! Lonny!—No. He never comes. Lonny! Lonny Copshrews! Lonny Copshrews!

He was the man I wished to marry; that was long ago, when I was a girl. Lonny Copshrews was the man I loved. One can only love once, they say; it is true. No one could love twice, like this. Love is strong as death, we used to say. It is a great deal stronger.

Lonny Copshrews painted me. [*She looks at the portrait Left.*] Such a one I was, this past. He has caught the look to the life. He was a marvellous artist, but a very wicked man. But, wicked or not, I love him. [*She leaves the portrait and goes to the centre near the man in armour.*] One, two, three, four. Four years between that day and my death. But really I died that day. [*She calls again.*] I am so unhappy; so unhappy!

One, two, three, four. Eighteen years since my death, and four years before that, twenty-two years.

All the Holtspurs who ever were are in this house. They can help me. Won't you help me? Sir Tirrold Holtspur, you who founded the family, and were so brave, you can comfort me.

[*She turns to the man in armour. She comes groping down the stage.*]

There are no Holtspurs now. Only Julia's boy, Bunny. Watching Julia and Bunny is my only joy. And little Susan Jones, who is coming here to-morrow, I love her. [*She goes up stage to look at portrait Right.*] Lonny! Lonny Copshrews! Why were you so cruel to me? Oh, you beautiful thing! That is exactly you. Just as you were twenty-two years ago, in this room, at this time of the year. This is what happened in this room at this time of the year, twenty-two years ago.

[*The scene changes to daylight, so that all the room can be clearly seen.*

Enter MYRTLE WEST *with* LAURENCE COPSHREWS, *Right Back.* LAURENCE COPSHREWS *carries a package of about 24″ × 15″ in his left hand. He is twenty-nine.*]

MYRTLE: Miss Holtspur. Oh, sir, she is not here after all. She must be upstairs. I'll go to look for her.

LONNY: Thanks.

MYRTLE: What name shall I say, sir?

LONNY: Copshrews. Laurence Copshrews.

MYRTLE: Oh, yes, sir.

LONNY: Not the rector, but from Paris, say.

MYRTLE: Very good, sir. [*Exit* MYRTLE *Left Back.*]

LONNY: A jolly pretty girl, that.

[MELLONEY *enters Left Back almost at once. She is twenty-five.*]

MELLONEY: [*Shaking hands.*] Why, Lonny, welcome back from Paris, you're very unexpected, aren't you?

LONNY: I'm not often expected at my home, even if I say I'm coming.

MELLONEY: Still, here you are. How is Paris?

LONNY: It's all right, for those that like that kind of thing.

MELLONEY: Your father will be a glad man. It must be two years since you were here.

LONNY: It isn't. It's fifteen months and odd days.

MELLONEY: You're very exact about it.

LONNY: I've reason to be exact. It was the last time I saw you.

MELLONEY: It has seemed like two years to your father.

LONNY: So he said. I don't like my father.

MELLONEY: I know. I cannot think why.

LONNY: He has been the thing I've had to fight since I was five.

MELLONEY: Now that you have beaten him, you can be generous.

LONNY: I don't know that I have beaten him.

MELLONEY: You've made your own way. You're famous.

LONNY: I'm notorious. That doesn't prove him wrong about me. Why did he put me into that insurance office when I was only fifteen?

MELLONEY: He wanted to be sure that you had a calling to be a painter.

LONNY: In the divine arts everybody is called, but people like my father intervene. And he had had fair warning not to interfere with me. He tried the same game on my brother Bill, and Bill ran away to sea. He was drowned somewhere off Sydney Heads on the day I was born. I wish Bill had lived. I can't tell you how much I wish that Bill had lived.

MELLONEY: You mean that you would have loved to have had a brother?

LONNY: I? No, I'd have knocked his head off, or he mine. No, for a very different reason.

MELLONEY: What? May I know?

LONNY: I'll tell you some day. I suppose my father is loved?

MELLONEY: Very much.

LONNY: People go to him in trouble and that kind of thing?

MELLONEY: They do.

LONNY: When he dies, they'll all turn out, to carry him to his grave?

MELLONEY: I hope that that will not be for many years to come.

LONNY: But they will?

MELLONEY: Yes, Lonny; all the village.

LONNY: That is the test, I suppose: what they think of you while you are still new to your coffin. They'd weep and they'd bring wreaths.

MELLONEY: Would not you, Lonny?

LONNY: Weep, and lay flowers for my father? No, by God! [*He moves rapidly over to Right and lights a cigarette.*]

MELLONEY: Lonny! [*No answer.*] Lonny! [*No answer.*] I won't have you here, Lonny, if you swear.

LONNY: All right; turn me out. Do.

MELLONEY: I don't want to turn you out. I want you not to speak like that.

LONNY: I'll speak my mind.

MELLONEY: Do. You have a beautiful mind. But that was not your mind: that was your Devil.

LONNY: You ought to be sorry for a Devil. He is in hell.

MELLONEY: What do you mean by that?

LONNY: In hell? In the depths of himself. But I'd rather be in hell than safe in the fold with a sheep like my father.

MELLONEY: Lonny, I won't hear your father abused. He is a good priest and a devoted, unselfish man.

LONNY: You prefer him to your own father, don't you?

MELLONEY: Lonny, that's not fair.

LONNY: Miss Melloney Holtspur doesn't get on with her father. I can't think why.

MELLONEY: I should have thought you could have guessed why.

LONNY: Perhaps I have guessed. You're very like your mother, and you are still on your mother's side, against your father, who was a beast to her. But I do get on with your father: I like him. He's real. Not many ruined squires could have built up this big cement works. Besides, he was the first man here to see what I am, and he buys my pictures. He doesn't pay me enough for them.

MELLONEY: Who could?

LONNY: He could. And then, Melloney, he's your father, and I find him damned useful as a dictionary.

MELLONEY: What do you mean?

LONNY: You're a very interesting book to me, Miss Melloney Holtspur.

MELLONEY: And do you think you can read me?

LONNY: I don't want to read you. I want to get you by heart. But I come upon all sorts of words that I don't understand, and then I look them up in the dictionary.

MELLONEY: Do you find them in your dictionary?

LONNY: Sometimes. But sometimes I only find them in the dark night when I can't sleep, when I go up and down in my mind, and trace out what you are. This life is a mysterious game, and we only play half our game ourselves.

MELLONEY: Surely we live our own lives, Lonny.

LONNY: I'm not so sure. But I'm sure it would have been a very miserable game for me, but for you. By God, when my father beat me and I wanted to kill him or myself, you were the only bright thing left. By God, you were an angel to me. However, you look out. Those who are angels to me get chastened. Save a rogue from the gallows and he'll cut your throat. Now I've warned you.

MELLONEY: I've already been warned, thank you, Lonny.

LONNY: Oh? Come on out, then, and have a set of tennis.

MELLONEY: We can't. The court's not marked.

LONNY: Is your dog Sam alive still?

MELLONEY: Very much alive.

LONNY: Well, you go and get Sam and I'll go and get my gun, and we'll have a bit of ratting around the granary. Your father wouldn't mind.

MELLONEY: We can't, Lonny. Julia's here with her baby boy, and you'd wake him.

LONNY: I didn't know Julia had a baby. What's his name?

MELLONEY: We call him Bunny. He's nine months old.

LONNY: I'm glad Julia's got a baby. I'm very fond of your sister Julia, and I pity her. Mento's made a pot of money over those breakwaters he builds, but he drinks like a fish, and he doesn't buy my pictures. I wanted to paint Julia, and she'd have been willing, but he beat down my price till I could only do a drawing.

MELLONEY: Did you do a drawing? I don't remember one.

LONNY: No. I told him to clear out and get a tintype taken. Chaps like Mento want a lesson now and then that genius is cheap at any price. Mento! He dropped ten thousand tons of concrete into the sea and they knighted him because it sank! I could have made him immortal by painting Julia; fairly immortal, that is; immortal enough for him.

MELLONEY: You might paint her now for me, Lonny, if you'd take the commission.

LONNY: Well, I won't take the commission, not from you. Besides, I shan't be here. I'm going.

MELLONEY: Going? After just coming! Back to Paris?

LONNY: No fear! I've done with Paris.

MELLONEY: Where, then?

LONNY: Some place.

MELLONEY: Are you in any trouble, Lonny?

LONNY: Trouble? Yes, I'm a Devil, outside the pale.

MELLONEY: Could I help in any way?

LONNY: Yes.

MELLONEY: How?

LONNY: You could shoot me dead.

MELLONEY: Lonny, never speak like that, no matter what trouble you are in. Come and tell me the trouble. Are you in want of money, or worried about your work, or in a mess with someone, or what is it?

LONNY: It's all of those things.

MELLONEY: Then sit down here and we'll get it all straight, just as we used to in the old days. First, you're in want of money. How much money?

LONNY: You can go to blazes!

MELLONEY: I don't like blazes, Lonny. I like keeping cool. How much did you say?

LONNY: Both hands in the till.

MELLONEY: Fifty pounds?

LONNY: I'm not good at sums.

MELLONEY: I'll give you fifty pounds for a pastel of Julia, or for two charcoal drawings, one of Julia, one of Bunny. I'll write you a cheque now.

LONNY: You will just kindly go to hell. Damn it! I wish I didn't swear so.

MELLONEY: I wish you didn't, Lonny.

LONNY: But you go a bit too far with me, offering me money like a damned picture-dealer. You aren't going to give me money. You're on the free list with me. What I am is yours, all that's holy of me.

MELLONEY: I'm sorry I mentioned money, Lonny. We will pass to the next matter. Now "damns have had their day," remember. One more damn or hell, and I ring for Kezia to show you out. Now be your nice self and say you're sorry.

LONNY: You shouldn't have insulted me with your charity.

MELLONEY: I won't have my æsthetic sense called names. Now, why are you worried about your work?

LONNY: Because I've gone outside the pale, and become a Devil. D'you think I care for this green earth? I don't. I've put to sea from it, and my art's my boat, and the sea's rough and my boat's leaky. Worried about my work? I've given my soul for it, and, after all, it isn't good, it isn't good.

MELLONEY: It is good, Lonny.

LONNY: It isn't good enough.

MELLONEY: What have you been painting? You haven't been exhibiting.

LONNY: Do you follow my work?

MELLONEY: Of course I do.

LONNY: Women don't like art; it's their only rival. They don't care for art; they've too much sense. They want their loves to be returned, so they love the artists, not what the ar-

tists love. What is art to you? What do you suppose it is to me? There's nobody, nobody on this green earth, I wouldn't sacrifice. There's nobody I haven't sacrificed. And all just to draw a line. There. There is a line. It isn't the line of a master.

MELLONEY: It's the line of one who will be a master. No one has been a master at your age.

LONNY: You lie, to make me happy with failure.

MELLONEY: I speak the truth so that you may not believe the cowardly lie you are telling yourself. You know that you are a great painter. How dare you deny the holy spirit in yourself?

LONNY: How can a holy spirit touch a creature like me?

MELLONEY: Because you've got to interpret it to men.

LONNY: Why doesn't it touch me, then?

MELLONEY: It does.

LONNY: It did. Now there is a blank; there is blackness, deadness, dryness. I've sacrificed everything for Emptiness.

MELLONEY: What mess have you been getting into, Lonny? Is it one that you can tell me about?

LONNY: This world is the mess. I ought not to have been born. It's my brother Bill's fault in a way. If he'd been placid and an ass, like my father, he would have stayed at home and been a comfort, as they call it. He would have done. I wouldn't have been wanted. I wouldn't have been born. All they gat me for was to be a consolation to my mother, who died when I was one. But for Bill they might have left me alone. I'd have been in the night of nothing. And all this suffering wouldn't have been.

MELLONEY: What suffering?

LONNY: The suffering I bring wherever I go. [*Enter* KEZIA SPINFIELD, *Left Back. She sees* LONNY *and is visibly discomposed, but advances down stage.*]

MELLONEY: Yes, Kezia?

KEZIA: It is Minnie Bracknell, Miss Melloney, come over from Nap Hill from Mrs. Holyport.

MELLONEY: Oh, yes, I had forgotten! Excuse me, Lonny. I'll go to her, Kezia. [*Exit, Left Back.*]

LONNY: Good-morning, Miss Spinfield. [KEZIA *gulps. They eye each other.*]
Did you speak?

KEZIA: No, Mr. Copshrews.

LONNY: My mistake. [*They eye each other.*]

KEZIA: Mr. Copshrews—

LONNY: Yes?

KEZIA: You had best go out of this house, sir.

LONNY: Why?

KEZIA: Then you won't bring suffering where it isn't deserved.

LONNY: I don't know what you are talking about.

KEZIA: You understand me well enough, Master Laurence. You can lose me my bread by complaining. You've no business to be here, sir.

LONNY: What do you mean by no business? You mind your own business, in your own kitchen, with your own broom. Lord, you take something on yourself!

KEZIA: I do, Master Laurence, I take a great deal on myself.

LONNY: Well, spare yourself the trouble, where I'm concerned.

KEZIA: I would I could, Mr. Copshrews. You're not a fit associate for those who live here.

LONNY: Are you?

KEZIA: I am a servant here, Mr. Laurence. I try to do my duty.

LONNY: Try to know your place.

KEZIA: It does not become you to remind me of my place, Mr. Copshrews. What one does in the place gives the station. You are presuming too much in coming to Miss Holtspur. There's a woman now at this door, Mr. Copshrews.

LONNY: What woman is that?

KEZIA: Minnie Bracknell, that you painted when you were here last, that you made the talk of Nap Hill.

LONNY: The dirty mind, and the dirty tongue, and the dirty soul of Nap Hill make the talk of Nap Hill, and the black-beetle soul of the brick Bethel makes you. Now you clear right out of here, Kezia Spinfield, or, old as you are, I'll set Devils on you. I am drawing you, now, and making your graven image, and if ever you presume to speak to me again like this, I'll burn you in a slow fire and make you dwindle away. Do you know what you ought to do?

KEZIA: My duty to those I love, Mr. Copshrews.

LONNY: No. Your duty to those you hate. Paint your cheeks and gather roses, and run naked through the streets, and take your fill of love until the even. Then you may know more of the sinners for whom Christ died. You vinegar in the salad of your neighbour's sin, get out!

KEZIA: I am going, Mr. Copshrews. It is no very great credit to a gentleman to miscall a servant. But I've seen you what you

are and told you; no fit company in this house. Pride will be known, Master Copshrews, and sin punished.

LONNY: O, la, la! [*Exit* KEZIA, *Left.*]

I wonder how much that old Devil really knows! However, now that the coast is clear, I'll return my borrowings. Is the coast clear? [*He takes a package from his pocket, goes rapidly Back of Stage near* MAN IN ARMOUR, *moves a catch, opens a panel, puts the package inside the panel and closes it. As he comes down stage, old* JAKE HOLTSPUR *enters, Right Back.*]

Good Lord! here's her father. How d'ye do Mr. Holtspur?

JAKE: Ah, Copshrews! Going strong? You look very guilty about something. Been pinching the plate?

LONNY: You gave me rather a start, sir. You're looking well, sir. Have you been finding any more Gainsboroughs?

JAKE: Not I, by the Lord Harry! There are too many looking for them. Have you been painting any more romantics?

LONNY: I've one I'd like you to see.

JAKE: You're at the Rectory? I'll come over to see it. Not to-day, though. I'm going now to town to see my Doctor. He's cutting down my alcohol, and at my age it's bad to alter habits. Have they given you a drink or anything? Will you have a glass of port or something?

LONNY: No, thanks, Mr. Holtspur, I may be painting this afternoon.

JAKE: I've got some very nice port still, for I don't drink it much myself. It's too sugary for my complaint. When I was young, my father told me to keep it for my old age. Now in my old age, by gad, I daren't drink it!

LONNY: A case of "If youth but knew!"

JAKE: Gladiator port, too; worth a guinea a pint. A very pretty tipple, Mr. Copshrews. But I don't like this abstinence

of yours. You can't paint if you don't drink. Have a Kummel, that can't do you any harm.

LONNY: No, nothing, thank you, Mr. Holtspur.

JAKE: You make me seem very inhospitable. Let me see, have I done anything in your line? I bought the Colway Millet since I saw you, Les Vanneurs. Are you still Schwärming for Millet? He used to be rather a pet of yours, didn't he?

LONNY: He was one of my toys when I was a child. I've sucked the paint off now and he's lost his taste.

JAKE: Who is the present man?

LONNY: Whom I admire? Myself. A jolly good painter, Mr. Holtspur.

JAKE: Well, there's nothing like faith, is there? There was something I wanted to ask you about. Could you look at some pictures for me, on the old terms?

LONNY My prices have doubled.

JAKE: Well, that was only to be looked for. Come and have a gin cocktail and talk it over. At least, have the cocktail; we must have the talk later. I've got to start. I'll come over to-morrow to see your picture. You must try to overcome this drought of yours. I don't like it. There's drought enough in the other world, by all accounts. [*He goes out, Left Back.*]

Con Dios! [*Enter* MELLONEY *at Back Right, leading* MINNIE BRACKNELL.]

MELLONEY: Just wait for one moment, Minnie; I'll write a note. [*Sits to write at table.* MINNIE *stands Right.*]

LONNY: Why, Minnie, how are you?

MINNIE: Nicely, thank you, sir.

LONNY: And how is little Bobby?

MINNIE: He's gone away, now, sir, back to his mother's.

LONNY: What times those were on the ice that Christmas, with Bobby and the sledge! You're looking very well.

MINNIE: Thank you, sir. Are you keeping on with your painting, sir?

LONNY: Yes. I still keep on with it.

MELLONEY: This is the note for Mrs. Holyport, Minnie; and the linen will go over by the carrier.

MINNIE: Thank you, Miss. Good-morning, Miss. [*Exit Right.*] Good morning, sir.

MELLONEY: Good-morning. I forgot that you knew Minnie. Let me see. You painted her, did you not?

LONNY: Remy and I both drew her a year ago, when Remy was here with me.

MELLONEY: Did you think her pretty?

LONNY: Yes, fruit is pretty: that's why it gets eaten.

MELLONEY: Even forbidden fruit?

LONNY: That's eaten first: see Genesis.

MELLONEY: Did you taste this fruit?

LONNY: No, but I was a damned fool not to, if that's the kind of thing you think.

MELLONEY: I do not like your Monsieur Remy.

LONNY: He is a good friend and quite a good painter.

MELLONEY: A man may be all that and yet a very bad influence.

LONNY: Well, he's coming to live here next year, so you can reform him. Who's the new maid you've got?

MELLONEY: The maid who let you in? Myrtle West.

LONNY: She's pretty.

MELLONEY: You'd better paint her.

LONNY: I was thinking so.

MELLONEY: What did you do to Kezia while I was out of the room?

LONNY: I've an old feud with that old hag.

MELLONEY: She's a dear soul, Lonny, and she's shaking like a leaf.

LONNY: She shouldn't believe evil, then.

MELLONEY: What have you done to make her believe evil?

LONNY: I've got to be myself, I suppose. Once, when I was a boy, she caught me trying to raise the Devil.

MELLONEY: You?

LONNY: I had to have some antidote to my father.

MELLONEY: You might have stopped short of the Devil, I should have thought.

LONNY: I did. He didn't come. I wasn't worth it. But I believe in the Devil. He was the first artist to quarrel with the Royal Academy.

MELLONEY: Now, Lonny, that is enough. I will not permit it. You must please go. You've been very rude to me. You have upset a poor old woman, and you make these offensive and blasphemous attempts at jokes.

LONNY: So you turn me out?

MELLONEY: Yes, I do, unless you will apologise.

LONNY: Well, I won't apologise. Remember, if I go now, you'll not see me within these doors again.

MELLONEY: Very well, Lonny.

LONNY: Very well, then. I hope you'll have a happy life with your Kezia. They'll make you elder at the Bethel if you keep on. Or even a prophet at the Ebenezer. Good-bye. [*Turns Right.*]

MELLONEY: Good-bye, Lonny.

LONNY: And I'll paint Myrtle West *and* Minnie Bracknell.

MELLONEY: Paint whom you like, Lonny.

LONNY: I shall. [*Exit, Right.*]

MELLONEY: Lonny?

LONNY: What?

MELLONEY: Aren't you forgetting something?

LONNY: [*Turning.*] To shake hands? No.

MELLONEY: No. I meant this parcel.

LONNY: Damn the parcel!

MELLONEY: It is yours, isn't it?

LONNY: [*Turns and flings parcel into fireplace.*] There, to hell with it!

MELLONEY: You missed hell by two feet.

LONNY: [*Takes the* HOLTSPUR BOOK *and flings it on the floor.*] There! *He turns, stamping and raging to the Right.*]

MELLONEY: Oh, Lonny, Lonny, Lonny! Come.

LONNY: Come where? You shouldn't madden me. It's all your fault. You know the kind of beast I am. [*He comes down Centre to face her and flings himself on his knees.*] I've been a wild beast. Here's my knife. Cut my heart out, or I'll cut off

my fingers one by one. I will. I swear I will! Well, if you think I'm joking, here's the first.

MELLONEY: Lonny, give me that knife; give it here. How dare you be so weak!

LONNY: I've been a beast to you, Melloney, and I'm going to do penance. Well, I'll put my hands in the fire. [*Runs at fire. She stops him.*]

MELLONEY: No, no, Lonny, dear. I don't want you to do penance. But pick up your drawings; they are drawings? [*He does so.*]

And now pick up our book. It is the Holtspur Book; manuscript from three centuries. [*He picks it up and dusts it.*]

David Mento thinks that a poem in the manuscript alludes to a hidden treasure here.

LONNY: Oh?

MELLONEY: There's the poem. David thinks there may be a sliding panel connected with the man-in-armour.

LONNY: Did he find one?

MELLONEY: No.

LONNY: Well, if the Scotchman didn't find the treasure, the Englishman need not look.

MELLONEY: I thought you would be thrilled at the thought of a secret hoard.

LONNY: I'm not thrilled by anything except the sense of your goodness to me. Why are you always like God Almighty to me? [*He takes her hand. She pats his hand and puts it from her.*]

MELLONEY: We're friends. I want you to show me your drawings.

LONNY: There are the drawings, then. [*He moves away, Right.*]

MELLONEY: But these are finished pictures!

LONNY: There are drawings underneath.

MELONEY: But these are splendid!

LONNY: They're the best things I've done. That one's Yseult. Do you mind my painting you for Yseult?

MELLONEY: I'm much touched, Lonny.

LONNY: The other's Guinevere. You'll be vexed at my painting you for Guinevere.

MELLONEY: I am very proud, Lonny.

LONNY: Yseult—Guinevere. Both took up with the fool. Yseult married a fool like me. Guinevere married a fool like my father. A wicked fool and a formal fool, whose touch was death. You be warned from the fool. I've warned you now, fairly. They were beautiful women, who could have married anybody; but only the fool wanted them, to that point.

MELLONEY: The best men in the world gave their lives for them.

LONNY: Ah! devotion, when it is too late; the best men are full of that. But the fools saw what they were. Folly goes with vision; folly and death.

Melloney, you do not know what you have been to me for all these years.

MELLONEY: I know what you are to me.

LONNY: Pah! what is that? If I were to die, it would not matter to you, but if you were to die, it would kill me.

MELLONEY: Perhaps if you were to die my life might not seem worth while.

LONNY: What difference could my death make to you?

MELLONEY: I think it would make all the difference.

LONNY: Melloney, answer me one thing. Three nights ago I could stand it no longer; I was in Paris; I called you and you answered. Was that you? [MELLONEY *nods.*]

You held out your hands to me, like that, and I took them, and it was all like a transfiguration. [MELLONEY *nods.*]

Over all those miles—my God! that was your real answer to me?

MELLONEY: I knew you wanted me, so I stood at my window and turned to you, and I know I reached you, and I was proud.

LONNY: And happy?

MELLONEY: Very happy. Intensely happy, for a time.

LONNY: Only for a time?

MELLONEY: Yes. Afterwards I had a terrible dream about you.

LONNY: What did you dream?

MELLONEY: I cannot bear to think of it; it was so unlike you. You struck me over the face, a blow that made me reel.

LONNY: But that was only a dream, Melloney. Dreams go by contraries.

MELLONEY: This was no ordinary dream.

LONNY: Nor was the other, when we met and held hands; that was the heart of life; our two souls understood each other.

MELLONEY: Yes. That was the heart of life, Lonny!

LONNY: Melloney, beloved!

MELLONEY: Oh, Lonny, you mustn't call me that!

LONNY: Why not? It is what you are.

MELLONEY: No, no, Lonny.

LONNY: Don't you like being called that?

MELLONEY: Yes, dear, it was very sweet. But you called me that in the dream.

LONNY: My heart's darling, then, that I love and worship. Is that better?

MELLONEY: It could not be better.

LONNY: Melloney, all these years I've longed to take your head in my hands, as I do now. It is like holding the Host; my God, I've painted this head and worshipped this head with all I am and can be.

MELLONEY: Oh, Lonny, darling!

LONNY: No, I'm not fit to kiss you, Melloney. I've been all down in the slough. I'm all rayed red with it. [*Pause.*] Your life is running into me like spring in a beechwood.

MELLONEY: [*Kissing his hand.*] Lonny, my lover, you'll not strike me with this hand, will you?

LONNY: Oh, Melloney! you mustn't do that. I'm not worthy.

MELLONEY: Promise you never will.

LONNY: Of course I never will.

MELLONEY: Because it would kill me if you did.

LONNY: Melloney, darling, put the nightmare away. Your eyes are all haunted with it. Your eyes are black and burning. Shut your eyes. [*He kisses her.*]

MELLONEY: Oh, Lonny! Oh, Lonny!

LONNY: My God, I'll always bless the apple-blossom, because it brought me to you!

MELLONEY: Life has not much to offer us after that.

LONNY: Whatever the past was, or the future may be, we'll have had that. And this. [*He kisses her again.*]

[*Enter* KEZIA SPINFIELD *at Right Back. She sees them and is aghast.*]

KEZIA: Miss Melloney! [*She advances down stage and the lovers break.*] Miss Melloney!

MELLONEY: Yes, Kezia, what is it?

KEZIA: There's somebody called, Miss Melloney.

MELLONEY: Who is it, do you know?

KEZIA: It's a lady, Miss Melloney, to speak to Mr. Copshrews.

LONNY: What lady?

[*Enter* MME. ALINE.]

MME. ALINE: This lady. Your wife.

LONNY: So you followed me!

MME. ALINE: You did not think to give me the sleep? This, mademoiselle, is my husband; the father of my daughter, Mees Lenda Copshrews, aged three months, now at your Rectoree.

MELLONEY: I did not know, Madam, that your husband was a married man.

MME. ALINE: We have been married fifteen months.

MELLONEY: And you have a little daughter. You will excuse me. [*Going Left.*] I hope the little daughter may grow up to every beauty and every happiness. Kezia, will you come with me? [*She bows. They go off, Back Left.*]

MME. ALINE: Well, Laurence?

LONNY: You've put yourself in the cart, I hope you know.

MME. ALINE: *Comment?*

LONNY: You've done for yourself. You followed me and you came here. By George, that's the very last!

MME. ALINE: Won't you come back with me and start again?

LONNY: No, I won't. Is that plain enough? *Je m'en fiche.* I've done with you. I thought you knew that a year ago. But after this—Anyhow, we've no place here. Get out!

MME. ALINE: Will you get out? Will I see you? There is to discuss.

LONNY: You will see me, sure enough. There is to discuss; you're right. Now go.

[ALINE *goes, Back Right.* LONNY *comes to table, Centre.*]

LONNY: No more need of these things! [*He wraps the drawings carelessly and flings them into the hiding-place. Then picks up the drawing of* KEZIA.] That's the last drawing I shall do. I'll sign and date it. My last; then the date—What the devil is the date? Signed L. C. There. [*Puts it in the hiding-place, which he closes.*] I am a rotten blackguard. Now then toss up. Heads, I go to the Isles of Greece. Tails, I join the Foreign Legion. [*Tosses.*] Heads, the Isles of Greece! Threes. [*Tosses again.*] Tails, the Foreign Legion. One all. [*Tosses again.*] Heads, the Isles of Greece! So be it. [*He goes swiftly out, Back Right.*]

The isles of Greece, the isles of Greece,
Where burning Sappho loved and sung.

[*The light changes to darkness and moonlight as before, and the stage is empty. After some seconds the* MAN IN ARMOUR *says.*]

SIR TIRROLD: Another hour.

[*The ghost of* MELLONEY HOLTSPUR *enters as before from Front Left.*]

MELLONEY: That is what happened in this room twenty-two years ago at this time of the year. I cannot get away from it. Lonny! Lonny Copshrews! No. He has never been here since. [*She comes right down to Centre Front.*] I think that a strange thing is going to happen here, for there are colours and sounds. And Bunny is troubled. It can only mean more unhappiness; for only the sad thing happens here. There is a noise of wheels, too; the living must be coming back. It is my sister Julia, with Bunny. [*She draws back Front Left, then off.* BUNNY'S *voice is heard off, saying.*]

BUNNY: Kezia has left the things here, Mother!

[*Enter* LADY MENTO.]

Just wait till I switch on the lights. [*He turns on all the lights.*]

JULIA: Only this one light, Bunny; my eyes are tired.

BUNNY: Right-ho! [*He switches all off except a green-shaded one, Right.*] Now sit you down.—Hullo! here's a note for you, marked "Urgent." [JULIA *sits in chair, Right.*]

Will you have soup or coffee, Mother? Oh, dash! I'm making a filthy mess of this.

JULIA: Soup, please.

BUNNY: This seems to be soup, and here's a biscuit. I'm going to have coffee. [*He pulls up a chair beside his mother, to Left of her and slightly below her.*] Anything serious in the note, Mother?

JULIA: Yes. Mrs. Trenchard is very much worse. She wants to speak to me before she dies. I wonder why. I must go down before breakfast. They've been good tenants, the Trenchards. Minnie Trenchard—she used to be so pretty. I'll leave word

that I'm to be called at six. I must be back early, for the Jones children will be here at ten, and Miss Copshrews at eleven. [*Goes Right, then returns.*] And how does the dance seem, in memory, Bunny?

BUNNY: It was a clinking dance.

JULIA: Is Miss Copshrews a . . . clinking partner?

BUNNY: She is. Mother, you knew Miss Copshrews' father, the painter. What was he like, exactly?

JULIA: That portrait. [BUNNY *examines the portraits.*]

BUNNY: Mother, you know, these two portraits are amazing. I agree with Edward Boveney; Laurence Copshrews was "as great a painter as any we have had."

JULIA: He shocked me, I must say.

BUNNY: Mme. Copshrews, his widow, married again last week.

JULIA: I saw that.

BUNNY: Do you know why she left him?

JULIA: I should say that the main cause was Laurence Copshrews, day in, day out, for the year or so they were married.

BUNNY: I think he was ill, Mother. He died within four years of the parting.

JULIA: The Laurence Copshrews of this world, Bunny, don't stand the strain of any real relationship; friendship, or partnership or marriage. Under their intellect, there is nothing that you can trust. [*She rises and comes to table, Centre.*]

BUNNY: You don't mind Miss Copshrews coming, Mother?

JULIA: She seems a nice young woman. I shall be glad to know her better. I did not like her parents.

BUNNY: I am very glad that she is coming, Mother.

JULIA: Yes, Bunny. I want you always to be glad, Bunny.

BUNNY: Thank you, Mother. Mother, I saw Edward Boveney there this evening for a minute. He said that Laurence Copshrews' best works were small paintings of the Arthur story, which he had seen, but which have absolutely disappeared. I wondered if they could possibly be here, stored away somewhere.

JULIA: Your Father went through everything when your Grandfather died. He found no paintings except these and those that were burned. There were some unimportant letters from Laurence Copshrews. Your Father burned them.

BUNNY: I wish that they had not been burned. Too much has been burned. I would like this house to have all its records that Laurence Copshrews came here.

JULIA: Does not Miss Copshrews know about the paintings?

BUNNY: No.

JULIA: The French woman may have them.

BUNNY: Edward Boveney says not.

JULIA: Lonny left them in Greece, then.

BUNNY: I hoped that they might be here somewhere.

JULIA: They're not.

BUNNY: This is a strange house, Mother. A lot of Holtspurs have lived and died in it. It must be full of us. I sometimes wonder if they don't take a part in our lives.

JULIA: We know that they do not, Bunny.

BUNNY: I know, Mother. But you are used to this house. I'm only just beginning to realise it. It holds all the secrets of all the Holtspurs for four hundred and fifty years. I wonder if there are any secret rooms!

JULIA: You'll find nothing romantic here, Bunny. Some of the romance went when water was laid on, and more when electric light was installed, but the last went when we put in central heating. The ghosts are all laid and the skeletons are all buried.

BUNNY: But there is romance, Mother. And the most romantic painter of modern times was here, and to-morrow his daughter will be here.

JULIA: I wonder, will she find romance here, Bunny!

BUNNY: I wonder that too, Mother.

JULIA: Good-night, my dear boy. Will you switch on the stair lights, and then put out?

BUNNY: Yes, Mother. Good-night.

JULIA: [*Moving off Right.*] Good-night.

BUNNY: [*Alone.*] Lenda—Lenda Copshrews. . . . This place seems full of the Holtspurs. . . . Who is that there? [MELLONEY *enters noiselessly from Left to the back of stage.*]

Midnight fancies! [*He switches off the last light.*] It's time for bed. [*He moves off Left across a dark stage, crooning.*]

> The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
> And it is well-nigh day,
> And Harry the King is gone a-hunting,
> To bring a deer . . .

[*A door shuts. Presently the clock strikes three.*]

SIR TIRROLD: Another hour!

MELLONEY: [*Comes down the stage in moonlight and sings in a little low voice.*]

> *Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,*
> *Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.*

Curtain

ACT II

The same.

[JEMIMA JONES (*fourteen*) *in a chair Left.* PETER JONES (*fifteen*) *reading a folio in a chair Right.* MARIA JONES (*twelve*) *heard off, trying to pick out a tune on the piano with one finger.*]

JEMIMA: Maria, do stop that noise. Lady Mento doesn't like it.

MARIA: You know quite well she's gone out. She can't hear.

JEMIMA: Well, I can. So stop. Peter! [*No answer.*] Peter! Peter! can't you answer?

PETER: Oh, shut up!

JEMIMA: No, but Peter—

PETER: What d'you want?

JEMIMA: Where's Susan?

PETER: Gone upstairs. [*Relapses to book.*]

JEMIMA: I say, Peter. Peter!

PETER: Why don't you have the nerve killed, or have it out?

JEMIMA: I want to ask you something.

PETER: Well?

JEMIMA: Peter, how are you enjoying this?

PETER: This place do you mean, or your conversation? I'm not enjoying your conversation.

JEMIMA: This place, of course.

PETER: It's a jolly fine place, and this is a frightfully interesting old book about it.

JEMIMA: Let me see.

PETER: It's a cut above your sex. It's mostly in Latin.

JEMIMA: Oh, we all know you're in the Sixth! But it's all in writing, Peter.

PETER: Of course, you can only read print; I forgot.

JEMIMA: I read a jolly sight more improving books than you do. I'll bet this is immoral, or you wouldn't like it so. I'll—

MARIA: Chuck it, you two; here's Bunny.

[*Enter* BUNNY, *Right.*]

PETER: Hullo, Bunny! Is it lunch time?

BUNNY: Getting on. Is my mother back yet?

JEMIMA: She's still with poor Mrs. Trenchard. She said don't wait.

BUNNY: Has Miss Copshrews come yet?

JEMIMA: Lenda? No. She telephoned. She won't be long.

PETER: How did the sketch go, Bunny?

BUNNY: Pretty fair. It's in the studio, if you'd like to see it.

PETER: I'd like to see it. [*Rising.*]

JEMIMA: You'd better get ready for lunch first, Peter.

PETER: [*Going Left.*] So'd you. I don't take quite such hours to tidy as you do.

JEMIMA: No, you never wash.

PETER: I don't. [*Goes to door.*] I bathe. [*At door.*] Squish! [*Exit. Then returns and says.*] Jemima! Squish! [*Exit.*]

JEMIMA: You pig! Come back and shut up your book. He always leaves his books about.

BUNNY: What is it? Oh, the Holtspur Book again. Our old manuscript. I can't follow most of it.

MARIA: Peter says *he* can.

JEMIMA: He would. He's always swanking.

MARIA: You swank yourself.

JEMIMA: Not more than anybody else.

MARIA: Yes, you do.

JEMIMA: No, I don't.

MARIA: You do.

JEMIMA: Who says so?

MARIA: Everybody says so.

JEMIMA: There's no such person as everybody, so there. So squish flat. Now go and tidy, because I've got to see you tidy.

MARIA: It isn't time yet.

JEMIMA: Yes, it is. Isn't it, Bunny?

BUNNY: Getting on, I should say.

MARIA: I'm going to play "Holy, holy, holy" first.

JEMIMA: No you are not to, Maria.

MARIA: Yes, I am. [*Runs off Right, and there is a squabble and banging of the piano.*]

JEMIMA: [*As the notes of "Holy, holy, holy" rise.*] That's very, very irreligious, Maria. You naughty little thing!

MARIA. I'll spit if you come any nearer. [*They are heard disputing away to the Right, off.*] I can spit jolly straight.

BUNNY. [*When the voices fade.*] Oh, Lenda, come soon, come soon! I cannot bear this waiting. [*Goes to perman Right.*] Lenda's father. The profile's like her. [*Comes down.*] She will be here now at any minute. Was that the car? No, I don't think she will have me. I'm such a duffer. [*He sits on table Centre and looks Right.*] Listen. No, it is not she. What shall I do if she won't have me? I don't think I'll want to live.

[*Enter the ghost of* MELLONEY, *Left.*]

[BUNNY *comes right down stage.*] I used to mock at people being sick with love, but I don't mock now. I pity poor women in love. If it's like this to me, who am a man, what must it be to them?

[*The stage darkens.*]

I can't live in this state of suspense. Who is that there? Is that you, Susan? [*Looks up, Left.*] I thought I saw someone. No, there's no one.

MELLONEY: Courage, Bunny.

BUNNY: Courage! Courage! But what use is courage in love?

MELLONEY: Love is courage.

BUNNY: This thing is driving me mad. I keep thinking I hear a voice.

[*Exit* MELLONEY, *Right.* SUSAN *(down) entering, Left.*]

SUSAN: Hullo, Bunny! [*Enters Left.*]

BUNNY: Oh, Susan, my dear, come and keep me company. Where have you been?

SUSAN: Having a lovely time.

BUNNY: What, all by yourself?

SUSAN: No, indeed.

BUNNY: But the others have been down here ragging. Were you with Kezia?

SUSAN: No, I was with the lovely lady.

BUNNY: Oh! which lady is that? Do you mean my mother?

SUSAN: No. That. [*Going to* MELLONEY'S *picture.*]

BUNNY: That?

SUSAN: Yes. Didn't you see her?

BUNNY: I? Just now, do you mean?

SUSAN: Yes. I heard you talking to her.

BUNNY: I was talking to myself.

SUSAN: She said she was going to comfort poor Bunny. Did you want to be comforted?

BUNNY: What on earth does the child mean? Comforted? One has bad moods sometimes. Tell me about this lovely lady.

SUSAN: No.

BUNNY: Do, Susan. Why won't you?

SUSAN: I'm too happy.

BUNNY: That's jolly. Happy at being here?

[SUSAN *nods.*]

You must come here often then.

SUSAN: I was always afraid of coming before, but not now; it's such a happy house. You see, it's her home.

BUNNY: The lady's? Yes.

SUSAN: I never knew where she lived till to-day. Were you ever ill here, Bunny?

BUNNY: No, I've never been ill. And I've only lived here a little while.

SUSAN: When I was at home I was ill once and had to live in bed—scarlet fever. Oh, it was lovely at nights! She used to come to sit by my bed and put her arm round me.

BUNNY: Was that the first time you ever saw her?

SUSAN: Yes, but of course I always thought of her, before that; ever since I can remember.

BUNNY: And then, when you had scarlet fever, she came?

SUSAN: Oh, I was glad when she came, for of course when she was there the little devil-man couldn't tickle me.

BUNNY: Did he, before?

SUSAN: He tickled me and tried to put me down the well.

BUNNY: But she stopped that? That must have been blessed.

SUSAN: That wasn't the blessedest thing. That is when she sings. When she sings, all the dear little bunny rabbits come out of the wall, and the dear little robins, and all the people who live here—I don't mean you, but Him.

BUNNY: The man in the picture?

SUSAN: No. He doesn't; but the man in armour does, and he puts back his helmet and opens his side, and the man in the red coat comes, and all the others who live here.

BUNNY: All to hear the song? What song does she sing?

SUSAN: I shan't tell you.

BUNNY: Oh, Susan! won't you tell poor old Bunny?

SUSAN: No. Unless you promise not to tell.

BUNNY: I won't tell.

SUSAN: Promise.

BUNNY: Faithfully

SUSAN: Clean potato; deal with you forever?

BUNNY: Clean potato; deal with me forever.

SUSAN: It's a very religious song about a prophet.

BUNNY: Has it a name?

SUSAN: Yes. The Seer Demur. Seer means a prophet, 'cos I looked it out.

BUNNY: Yes. And what does the Seer Demur do in the song? What does the song mean?

SUSAN: It hasn't got a meaning; it's religious like in church.

BUNNY: Ah! yes. And has she been singing to you to-day?

SUSAN: All the time, Bunny. Oh, Bunny, I think something very important is going to happen, 'cos I'm so happy.

BUNNY: I think so, too, my dear.

SUSAN: Haven't you heard her singing?

BUNNY: No.

SUSAN: But listen. She's singing there.

[*Very faintly off, Left, the voice of* MELLONEY *is heard, singing.*]

MELLONEY: *Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,*
Chagrin d'amour dure toute la vie.

[*A door shuts and kills the noise.*]

BUNNY: That's the voice that I used to hear when I stayed here when I was little . . . and then, just now.

SUSAN: This is a very, very, very happy house, Bunny.

BUNNY: I hope it always will be, Susan.

SUSAN: Bunny, do you think I could kiss the lovely lady? [*Going back.*]

BUNNY: Kiss a picture, my dear? I wouldn't.

SUSAN: You would; for I saw you kiss that little one on your desk this morning.

BUNNY: Oh! You see too much. Well, kiss her, then.

SUSAN: [*Kissing portrait.*] Good-bye, lovely lady. Now here's Kezia, to make me wash my hands for lunch.

[*Enter* KEZIA, *Left.*]

KEZIA: Now, come along, Miss Mischief, to wash those little puddocks.

SUSAN: [*To her fingers.*] Mr. Long Larder and Miss Etty Bodkin, you must come and be washed.

[*Exeunt Left. When they have gone,* BETHIA *enters Right.*]

BETHIA: [*Speaking to someone still off.* I'm afraid her ladyship hasn't come back yet. Oh, Master Bunny; it's Miss Copshrews, Master Bunny.

BUNNY: Oh, I say! thank you, Bethia. Talking to Susan, I never heard your car. Come in! Come in!

[*Enter* LENDA COPSHREWS, *Right. She is tall, dark, quick, with a fine kindling profile and lion-like carriage of the head. Enter silently, behind* LENDA, *the ghost of* LONNY COPSHREWS. *He remains at Back Right, while* LENDA *comes down stage to shake hands Right centre with* BUNNY.]

LENDA: How do you do . . . Bunny?

BUNNY: Well, Lenda; I am glad to welcome you here at last.

LENDA: I'm sorry to be late; I punctured.

BUNNY: Mother's gone to see an old tenant who is ill. She will be back directly. She'll be grieved not to be the first to welcome you. We'll be lunching in a few minutes. Would you like to go to your room?

LENDA: Thank you, but not for just one minute, Bunny. I'd like to take it all in.

BUNNY: Do you remember this room?

LENDA: I remember the man in armour. Or I think I do. It is like a memory of a dream. Was my father often in this room?

BUNNY: Often. He didn't draw here, because of the light. I'll show you where he drew later on. It was in the North Room, my grandfather's study, where the pictures were burned. But he was in this hall often. This is his portrait, Lenda. [*He unhooks it and brings it down for her to see.*]

LENDA: So that is the portrait. It is one of his best.

BUNNY: It is like you, in a way, in profile.

LENDA: Poor father!

BUNNY: I'll put it on the table, while I fetch you the other; the one of my aunt. This is the one he did of Aunt Melloney. [*He brings it down stage to her, to her Left.*]

LENDA: It is very beautiful. A different type from your mother, Bunny. I've known this face all my life. My grandfather always kept a photograph of this Miss Holtspur on his desk.

BUNNY: They were great friends. And she saw you often when you were little.

LENDA: I wish I could remember her, Bunny.

BUNNY: Can't you?

LENDA: No. Except that, standing here, I have a sort of memory of someone in white standing by the man in armour. But I wasn't three when I left here, Bunny.

BUNNY: I know. You know, Lenda, I can't remember her, but I have a sort of memory, like yours, of someone in white, here, singing a plaintive song. Do you remember Kezia Spinfield, our old housekeeper?

LENDA: No.

BUNNY: She remembers both you and your father. Of course she was here then. You must talk to her about him.

LENDA: It is wonderful to be here, where my father was. It means more to me than I can say.

BUNNY: Lenda, this portrait of your father ought to belong to you. We've no right to it. I want you to let me give it to you. Will you? To mark your first coming here?

LENDA: Oh, Bunny, no. But how beautiful of you to think of it! You say you have no right to it. He thought you had. I was reading his papers only this morning. He calls this the only place where he had ever been happy. These things were his thanks to you.

BUNNY: Mayn't they now be my thanks to you, Lenda, for all the happiness you've brought to me?

LENDA: I couldn't take them, Bunny; they belong here. We'll put them in their places.

BUNNY: Oh, Lenda, dear, don't cry, dear!

LENDA: I'm not crying, Bunny. It's only a little gush of pity that he was only happy here, though he could do these things. Is this how the hook goes? No, there.

BUNNY: It is the one boast of this house that he was happy here, Lenda.

LENDA: The world was hell to him, all through his life; and through fire and chance and fate his best works are lost, and yet the world calls him "a wasted life."

BUNNY: Is not that what happens with all great work? Only half is allowed. The powers of evil prevent more.

LENDA: The powers of evil are in men and women, Bunny. It is the poor thing in us that makes poverty.

BUNNY: Ah, Lenda! I feel that there are powers of good and evil always outside us, ready to enter in. But I know one thing, Lenda, that it is the glorious thing in you that makes me glorious. I've felt like a man transfigured ever since I saw you first. I know I'm not clever like you, nor wise, nor beautiful, nor anything, but all there is of me just worships you. I love you down to the depths, Lenda.

LENDA: You should not have said that, Bunny.

BUNNY: What? About depths?

LENDA: Yes, for I'm my father's daughter. There are depths in me.

BUNNY: And if there are, I'll love you for them and beyond them.

LENDA: I believe you would, and it's very sweet to be so loved, Bunny. But you ought not to have depths in your life, Bunny; only heights and happiness.

BUNNY: I know what I want in life. You. I've never been in love before. I know I never can be again. I know I'm not good enough for you. Who can be? Who could be? It isn't always merit that decides this, thank God; that's why I speak. If you can't have me, you can't, and I won't ever even speak of

it again. I didn't mean to now. It's a mean advantage when you are my guest. Only you're too beautiful not to upset me, after I've been waiting all these hours. So there it is, beloved, and God bless you.

LENDA: Yes, there it is, Bunny; as you say.

BUNNY: I didn't think you could care for me, Lenda; that was too mad a hope.

LENDA: Bunny, have you been suffering like this ever since we met?

BUNNY: Yes, though it has been happy suffering.

LENDA: Ever since the Wrocester Hunt Ball?

BUNNY: Yes. You came into the ball-room in white, with that sparkle thing in your hair. You came with the Colways, and looked round for someone.

LENDA: And that was the end of your peace?

BUNNY: I don't call it that. I say it was the beginning of my glory, for to love you is glory enough.

LENDA: And then Mrs. Boveney introduced you.

BUNNY: Yes. God bless her.

LENDA: I pray God bless her, too, Bunny, for the same reason.

BUNNY: You mean it has meant a little, even to you?

LENDA: It has meant more than a little to me, Bunny.

BUNNY: Lenda darling, I know you won't torture me. How much more has it meant?

LENDA: I think it has meant just everything, Bunny, since first I looked into your eyes.

BUNNY: Then you care for me, Lenda, as I care for you?

LENDA: Not care for you, Bunny; I love you, my darling.

BUNNY: Oh, Lenda, my beloved!

LENDA: It's too great joy, isn't it?

BUNNY: Almost. It's the greatest joy that ever could be. Oh, Lenda, you are marvellous! [*Gazing.*]

LENDA: My little Bunny!

BUNNY: I wish I could see my image in your eyes.

LENDA: Your image is in my heart, beloved. [*They kiss and then kiss again.*]

BUNNY: And how are we to come back into the world, after that?

LENDA: With a new heart and new eyes.

BUNNY: Please God, this old hall will be happy to you as it was to your father. I think this old house must be glad of our joy, Lenda. All the fifteen generations of Holtspurs must have felt, as we feel, in this hall. They must be here still.

LENDA: And perhaps my father, too. I hope so.

BUNNY: I hope so, too. And what we hope, comes. [KEZIA SPINFIELD *enters, Left.*]

KEZIA: Mr. Bunny, little Miss Susan says you promised to blow her some bubbles while she is washing her hands.

BUNNY: I did. I'll come, Kezia.

KEZIA: She says she'd come herself to call you, but she's all soapy.

BUNNY: Lenda, I don't think you've met our old friend, Miss Kezia Spinfield. Miss Copshrews, Kezia. [KEZIA *mumbles.*]

LENDA: Why, you're the kind friend who gave me the sugar-candy on little bits of string. I've thought of you so often. How do you do?

KEZIA: I'm very well, I thank you, Miss Copshrews.

BUNNY: Well, you will talk about those old times while I blow Susan some bubbles. I won't be a minute. [*He hurries off, Left.*]

LENDA: Is Moo-moo alive, still?

KEZIA: You mean Myrtle West, Miss, that used to be the under-housemaid here?

LENDA: Yes. I always called her Moo-moo. I couldn't say Myrtle. She used to give me rides round the garden.

KEZIA: No; she is dead, Miss.

LENDA: Ah! How did she die?

KEZIA: She got into trouble, Miss, and perhaps it was better as it was.

LENDA: Where is she buried?

KEZIA: In the waste bit at Naunton Crucis, for, you see, Miss, she took her own life, before her child was born.

LENDA: And they would not bury her in the churchyard?

KEZIA: No, Miss.

LENDA: The brutes! I'll go to-morrow and put flowers on her grave.

KEZIA: God has done that, Miss, for poor Moo-moo, for every year her grave comes up with the crocus, and afterwards the wild forget-me-not. And the little daisies are as many as stars.

LENDA: Poor Moo-moo! There was no harm in her; nothing

but fun. She was like a happy bird, singing. Do you remember my father coming here, and painting?

KEZIA: Yes, Miss Copshrews.

LENDA: I never knew my father. Can you tell me something about him, some memory of him, so that I can think of him here?

KEZIA: Yes, Miss Copshrews; I can.

LENDA: That will be beautiful to me, if you will.

KEZIA: I knew your father, Miss Copshrews, as a servant knows a visitor; without any pretence. God forgive me and him and all of us, but he brought nothing but evil upon this house.

LENDA: Evil? How?

KEZIA: It is over, Miss Copshrews, as far as evil can be; with the people dead. But even poor Myrtle West was due to him.

LENDA: That is nonsense; he died while she was still here, and he was dying for a year before that.

KEZIA: Miss Copshrews, long before your father's death he brought a French friend here, a Doctor Remy. They used to go sketching together. Afterwards the Doctor was often here, staying in the village. He was a young man and a handsome man, and he flattered the girl with painting her portrait, and brought her to the grave.

LENDA: But how can you say that was due to my father?

KEZIA: Miss Copshrews, if I'm uncharitable may God forgive me, but where the teaching errs, the heart strays. Like master, like pupil, in this world, Miss Copshrews, and like father, like child.

[*Enter* LADY MENTO, *Right.*]

Miss Copshrews, my lady. [*Exit Kezia, Left.*]

JULIA: Ah, Miss Copshrews, so you are here! I have been to see an old tenant who is ill. Has no one welcomed you? Was not my son here?

[*Enter* BUNNY, *Left.*]

BUNNY: Yes I was here, mother; but I've been blowing bubbles for Susan. How is Mrs. Trenchard, Mother?

JULIA: Very ill and wandering. She hasn't spoken to me yet. I must go there again after lunch, in case she should speak before she dies. Miss Copshrews, this is a very funereal welcome. It is black like the day. Will you come with me, now, so that I may show you your room?

LENDA: Thank you.

BUNNY: Mother, before you go, I must tell you that I've asked Lenda, here, to marry me and we are engaged.

LENDA: Will you trust your son to me? I love him very, very dearly.

BUNNY: And I her, Mother.

JULIA: My dear, and Bunny. I hardly know what to say, though I supposed that something like this might happen. I had hoped to have my son a little longer. Women cling to their possessions, looks, lovers and sons; time takes them all; time and other women. You are very like your father, whom I knew a little.

BUNNY: Won't you kiss her, Mother?

JULIA: That is your province to-day my son. I have just come from the presence of death, and, I am afraid . . . of sin, and I am wondering at the meaning of it all, and whether there be a meaning. Will you come then, child?

LENDA: Won't you call me Lenda? [*They begin to move off to the Right.*]

JULIA: Lenda. Is that from the Spanish word that means pretty?

LENDA: It was a name my father chose. It means me.

BUNNY: To me it means Everything.

[*They go out. It darkens. When they are gone, the ghost of* LONNY COPSHREWS *comes down to the table, Centre, while the ghost of* MELLONEY *advances up towards the table.* MELLONEY *is singing.*]

MELLONEY: *Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,*
Chagrin d'amour—

[*She sees* LONNY.] Lonny! Is that you, Lonny?

LONNY: Yes.

MELLONEY: What are you doing here?

LONNY: I've come here with my daughter.

MELLONEY: Your daughter, that you robbed me of. How dare you enter this house?

LONNY: I am with my daughter everywhere.

MELLONEY: You are richer than I. I am with my misery everywhere. And you come back to taunt me.

LONNY: I come back because my daughter is going to marry Bunny.

MELLONEY: Marry Bunny? Never! She shall not.

LONNY: They love each other, and there are the marks of happy love on both of them.

MELLONEY: Your touch has done evil enough in this house. It shall not taint Bunny.

LONNY: I want that old stain washed away by their happiness. [MELLONEY *laughs.*] Is it not time?

MELLONEY: Time? So, because suffering has gone deep for twenty years, it should be forgotten? How will their happiness wash away what you have done to me? I was young. I was strong. I might have borne children and been happy and fulfilled myself. You broke me, body and soul. Now I am this. I had never known that there could be people like you in the world. How could I? And all my love, all that was beautiful in me, all my morning, all my pride, for I used to be proud, were just nothing to you. I might not have had them. They weren't what you wanted.

LONNY: That is not true.

MELLONEY: What do you know of truth? It is true.

LONNY: I cared for nothing but those things, but I was a dirty hound none the less.

MELLONEY: And you went on, just the same, as though nothing had happened. Any other woman would have done, as well as I, who used to be Melloney. And since then you have had your daughter, and I nothing but suffering, a going down into the grave and walking in the body of death. But you shall now meet your punishment from this House that you have wronged.

LONNY: How can you punish me?

MELLONEY: Thus. Come, all of you, dwellers of this House. And you, the founder of the House, Sir Tirrold Holtspur.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: The Hour is come. For many years, the thoughts of justice spread the nets of justice in the hearts of men. Now the nets have brought you to the judgment and punishment of your sin.

LONNY: I am already judged and punished. I am in hell.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: How?

LONNY: I know, now, that I might have been a great artist, and was not, through my own fault.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: You have been punished for your sin towards yourself, not yet for your sins to others. This might have been a happy woman, and was not through your fault.

LONNY: I behaved to her with every infamy.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Her suffering has bred kites to tear your infamy

LONNY: And they have torn me.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Not yet to the inmost soul.

LONNY: What worse suffering can they inflict?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Your sin will be worked out on those you love.

LONNY: I love her. [*Indicating* MELLONEY.]

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: You love your daughter.

LONNY: She is a child.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Sins are visited upon children.

LONNY: If that be so, do not boast of it.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: I tell you the law. You will suffer through her, in the way decreed.

LONNY: Two things will annul your decree. First, her innocence.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Innocence is the sword to guilt. What is your second thing?

LONNY: My virtue, which must atone for much.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: What was this virtue?

LONNY: This, that for all my wickedness, I cared for truth and beauty and colour; three things which have never let man down. I was taunted and despised. I was ragged and starved. But I called those things noble with all my strength, all my life long.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Of those things you made a bondage for your soul, so that you were blind to reality.

LONNY: What is reality?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: The godhead of man. The brotherhood of man. The communion of spirits.

LONNY: Words.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Pain shall make you see. [*He moves back to his place.*] Your punishment begins.

LONNY: I will think my own thought in spite of every devil and every angel.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: You shall weep your sin. In spite of every virtue and every love.

LONNY: I weep my sin in my own hell. Nothing that you can do can touch me further.

MELLONEY: Your sin, finding you out, shall touch you further.

LONNY: My shame, for what I did to you, is pain enough, Melloney.

MELLONEY: It is not pain enough for me, viper.

LONNY: Pour me poison, then, that I may drink.

[*Enter* LENDA *from Left Back. She comes down stage, Right.*]

MELLONEY: This is the cup of your bitterness. [She stares at LENDA, then moves away, *Left Back, silently.*]

LONNY: Lenda. Lenda.

[*She is unconscious of his presence. She picks up a book from the table, Right. A gong is beaten off, Left.* LONNY *moves away, Right Back.* BUNNY *enters Left Back. The children enter from all points.*]

BUNNY: Ah, Lenda. Now come along, you people.

LENDA: How dark it is. It is going to thunder.

BUNNY: It is going to pour.

PETER: "A rain in May makes good June hay."

SUSAN: There! Look at that! Lightning!

JEMIMA: [*Counting.*] One, two, three, four. It's not very near. Five, six, seven.

[*There comes a crash of thunder with a spotting of rain.*]

Curtain.

ACT III

The same.

[PETER *and* SUSAN *enter, Right Back. They come down Front.*]

PETER: Now, Susan. This is what I want to examine. [*Goes to* MAN IN ARMOUR.] I believe there's treasure buried inside this old geezer-gee.

SUSAN: Oh, Peter, how heavenly!

PETER: What else can this poem in the book mean? [*Reads.*]

> "Sir Tirrold Holtspur to all his House:
> Holtspur, if thou beest ruinate, still trust
> In my right arm to raise thee from the dust;
> More than the half I tell thee, which, if 't fall
> As 'tis most like, thy wit shall madrigal."

SUSAN: It's a very geezer-gee-ish poem.

PETER: Of course it is. He wanted people to think it tosh because it's a hint where the treasure is buried. "Trust in my right arm." The right arm's the clue. [*Climbs on a chair, Right.*] I can't see all his gauntlets, he's gripping his horn so hard.

SUSAN: Is there a secret spring?

PETER: I haven't spotted one yet, but live and learn. I say: some stuff, this armour. Jolly useful kit for Rugger. He doesn't seem to have any give anywhere.

SUSAN: Jab him in the plexus. [*Climbing up.*] Try that knobby thing.

PETER: [*Trying.*] No. Besides, that isn't on his arm.

SUSAN: How did he scratch when he tickled?

PETER: I expect he Keating'd up, so as not to have to. Give the bolts a jab. No. They don't seem to move at all.

SUSAN: Try the floppy thing on his elbow.

PETER: [*Trying.*] No. I expect it would be some quite small thing like a nut.

SUSAN: Try up at his shoulder.

PETER: I tried all his shoulder first thing. Hand up that tumbler with the paraffin. [*Takes and oils armour.*]

SUSAN: Peter, the place will stink of paraffin for weeks. What are you doing?

PETER: It'll soak in or evaporate. It'll oil up his joints. Then we'll come back presently and have a go with a screw-driver. Then he might open.

SUSAN: Oh, hooray!

PETER: It won't be hooray, I'm afraid. The old geezer-gee's a wash-out.

[*Enter* MARIA, *Left, on tiptoe.*]

MARIA: Oh, Peter, have you found it?

PETER: No, not yet.

MARIA: I expect it's been found, long ago. Bunny said they'd searched.

PETER: I'll just lie down and squint up. I say, he's jolly well dripping paraffin, like billio. It's not *in* him.

MARIA: I expect it's a wash-out. Come on out.

SUSAN: Just let me have a go.

MARIA: I'm afraid it's no go. Do you see anything, Susan?

SUSAN: Only pools of paraffin.

MARIA: Well, come along out. He's a dud.

PETER: I'm afraid so. Where's Jemima?

MARIA: Gone to the Woman's Institute.

PETER: She would. Well, he's a dud. Did the papers come?

MARIA: Yes.

PETER: Anything about the Rushton case?

MARIA: Oh, yes, Peter; they've found the body.

SUSAN: Oh, hooray! Where?

PETER: Was it murder?

MARIA: Yes. She'd been flung down the well. And they found the hammer that did the deed. There's a heavenly picture of the hammer.

PETER: Come on; let's come and see.

SUSAN: And then let's go out and go on with our cave in the shrubbery.

MARIA: Yes, let's. Come on, Peter.

PETER: All right. I've bagged some wire to keep up the sides.

SUSAN: Come on. It will be simply heavenly. [MARIA *and* SUSAN *skip off Left Back.*] Come along, Peter, before Jemima comes back.

PETER: I'm just coming. [*When they are gone, he says.*] By Jove, it might not be in his arm. It might be the Holtspur cock's arm, in the crest up above. A jolly good idea. I'll give it a good old prod with the poker. [*Does so.*] No. Nothing doing. But I'll give it another prod. [*Does so.*] That sent the plaster down inside somewhere. [*Gives a third prod.*] Golly, I nearly had the whole thing down. No more.

[*He puts down the poker and exit Left. As he goes out, the panel joggles slowly down, opens the hiding place wide, and then very slowly joggles up and shuts. It does this with a rhythmical, distinctive noise.* [BUNNY *enters Right Back.*]

BUNNY: No. She is not here, Mother.

[*Enter* JULIA *Right Back.*]

JULIA: Just call her, will you, Bunny? She must be with the children. [*She goes to table, Centre.*]

BUNNY: [*Calling Left Back.*] Lenda!

LENDA: [*Off.*] Yes.

BUNNY: Can you come to us for a moment? We are in the hall.

LENDA: [*Enters Left Back.*] Here I am. Oh, Lady Mento. I hope that your tenant is better.

[MELLONEY *enters at Left Back and remains there during the scene.*]

JULIA: Poor Minnie Trenchard can never be better in this world, my dear child. She cannot live through another day, and it is better so. I have talked to her and she is easier in her mind. I would like now to speak to you.

LENDA: Certainly, Lady Mento. Shall it be here?

JULIA: Yes. I have had a very terrible day. It is about your father, Lenda, that I wish to speak to you. Bunny, I am very tired; will you bring me a chair here to the table? [BUNNY *brings chair.*] Thank you, Bunny. [*She sits.*] [*To* LENDA.] Minnie heard, somehow, that you were to be here, and that led to her sending for me. It is strange. She had not meant to tell me much; but in the thunder this afternoon she heard as it were a voice commanding her to tell everything. So she has spoken out her heart.

LENDA: Will you tell me, Lady Mento, who this Mrs. Trenchard is, or was?

JULIA: She is the widow of James Trenchard. She farms her late husband's small farm at Knott Green here. She *was* Minnie Bracknell, once maid to old Mrs. Holyport at Nap Hill.

LENDA: Thank you.

JULIA: You know that as your father was unlike other men in intellect, so he was in other ways.

LENDA: Yes, one sees that from his face.

JULIA: No doubt. Since you know that, you may perhaps be prepared for the confession which was made to me to-day.

LENDA: I hope so, Lady Mento.

JULIA: I trust so. Your father came to know Mrs. Trenchard, then Minnie Bracknell, after his return from Greece. It seems that they lived together at Tatchester for some months, unknown to anybody here.

LENDA: If they cared for each other, Lady Mento, I am glad that they had that happiness.

JULIA: It was no happiness, Lenda. Sin cannot bring happiness in this world.

LENDA: Forgetfulness then.

JULIA: Forgetfulness of much that none should ever forget. While they were living thus, your father told his companion that he had often been in this House and had searched it for secrets, apparently in order that he might turn them to account.

LENDA: What were the exact words used, Lady Mento?

JULIA: That was the exact meaning.

LENDA: It is important to me, Lady Mento, that the exact words should be given, so that I may know the exact charge made.

JULIA: These were the words—"He told me that he had often searched Holtspur House for secrets that he might use." I will not be certain whether she said "he might use" or "might be of use." Remember, she is a dying woman and spoke with difficulty.

LENDA: I remember. Did she say that he had found secrets?

JULIA: Yes. He had.

LENDA: And used them, or abused them?

JULIA: My child, it is very painful to me to have to tell you that he abused them . . . terribly . . . in a terrible way.

BUNNY: Mother darling, shall we not let this old dead past be, and forget it and forgive it? All this cannot matter to any living soul now; it is long since utterly at an end. Lenda is our guest and my love.

LENDA: Bunny, dear, all this is very, very interesting to me. Let me hear it to the end. Will you go on, Lady Mento, if you are not too tired? In what way did my father abuse his knowledge?

JULIA: It is not easy for me to tell you.

BUNNY: It is not easy for Lenda to listen.

JULIA: No, my dear boy, it is not. And this that I have to tell you will be more bitter than anything that has gone before.

LENDA: Let me hear it then, and know the worst.

JULIA: It seems that many years ago, when your father was painting those portraits, he discovered from some book, evidently the Holtspur Book here on the table, the whereabouts of a secret hiding-place in which a former Holtspur had hidden family jewels. Your father boasted to his accom—companion that those jewels which he had found had been "as good as the bank to him."

LENDA: Meaning that he had stolen and sold them?

JULIA: I know no other interpretation that can be put upon such words.

LENDA: Let that be the interpretation. The woman is dying and speaking the truth.

BUNNY: But is that so, Mother? She is at the point of death, and speaking from memory of a time long past, and, as you said just now, she was in some hallucination, thinking that she heard voices.

JULIA: Unfortunately, her statement seems to be borne out by these papers which she gave me. These are two inventories

of jewels in the handwriting of Sir Jotham Holtspur, who wrote this book. On each inventory is a note in your father's hand. "Got for this lot £127.10, Buck and Littlewick." On the other, "Fetched only a hundred guineas. Binfields." Both notes dated twenty-seven years ago.

LENDA: [*Comparing the script with the book.*] Yes. Sir Jotham wrote the inventories and I think my father wrote the notes.

BUNNY: But, my dear Mother, that doesn't prove that the jewels existed, or that they were found here or sold, or that Mr. Copshrews sold them, or that he stole them if he did sell them. If he did sell them at all, it was probably as Grandfather's agent. He was always buying and selling pictures and things for Grandfather, and got a commission for doing so, and jolly well deserved it. The commission on these two sales, if they were sales, would have been about £24, or quite "as good as the bank" to an artist under twenty-five.

JULIA: Your defence occurred to me, Bunny; but your Grandfather kept exact accounts of all such commissions in these private journals. No such transactions as these two are mentioned in these volumes here.

LENDA: Did Mr. Holtspur, your father, ever mention the jewels?

JULIA: Never. I am certain that he never knew of their existence.

LENDA: Let us call this Non Proven for the moment. I will thrash it all out with the buyers, if they can be traced. Binfields, you said, and Buck and Littlewick.

BUNNY: Buck and Littlewick are art dealers in Ryder Street, St. James's.

LENDA: Good. So my father lived in sin, and may or may not have stolen the plate. Was any other charge brought against him?

JULIA: Yes.

LENDA: May I hear it?

JULIA: Yes. While he and Mrs. Trenchard were living thus, they became short of money. Your father was not then working at his profession. Bunny, will you draw the curtain from your Aunt Melloney's portrait? [*He does so.*] That is my dead sister, Melloney, who was at that time living here. It seems that she cherished some affection for your father and that your father knew this . . .

LENDA: Yes, Lady Mento?

JULIA: And presumed upon it.

LENDA: In what way did he presume upon it?

JULIA: By sending his companion to her for money to relieve their want.

LENDA: Which she granted?

JULIA: Three times, to the extent of more than one hundred and eighty pounds.

LENDA: And what happened then?

JULIA: Your father fell ill and he and Minnie parted. Mr. Boveney found your father and cared for him until he died. Minnie came home. Presently young James Trenchard married her, knowing nothing of all this till long afterwards, when it hastened his end, poor man.

LENDA: I wish that Mrs. Trenchard had sent for me, to tell me all this.

JULIA: She sent for me, Lenda, because she felt that a wrong had been done to this house.

LENDA: By my father?

JULIA: I do not say by your father; by the two of them together.

LENDA: And I am afraid that you feel that too, Julia.

JULIA: I feel only miserable.

LENDA: It is miserable that the child of such a father should enter this house . . . on other terms.

JULIA: My dear, whatever my feelings may be, I have laid the case before you fairly, without prejudice, without passing judgment.

LENDA: Why did you lay it before me?

JULIA: It was the dying woman's request that you should know.

LENDA: Did the voice bid her?

JULIA: So she said, and believed. And it is better that you should know. And surely better that you should know that I know.

LENDA: You are not wholly displeased, Lady Mento, that these revelations should come, at this time?

JULIA: There were objections to your engagement to my son before these revelations were made to me.

BUNNY: None that will have any weight with me, Mother.

JULIA: Yes, Bunny, objections that must have weight with you. We are now poor, and your father's firm is involved; you must marry wealth, or work to restore it. You have talents,

and I mean you to have a career, apart from this trivial painting and philandering. My son's honour is pledged to this house.

LENDA: And my honour is pledged to him.

JULIA: That being so, it is for him to be scrupulous towards you. He has no means and no profession, and obligations elsewhere.

BUNNY: Mother, that is true of nine out of ten young men. Every man is a waster till he marries. I shall work for Lenda.

JULIA: At what?

BUNNY: I shall go into the firm.

JULIA: That, my son, I think you will not be able to do if you marry Miss Copshrews.

LENDA: Why not, Lady Mento?

JULIA: It would not seem to me to be fitting.

LENDA: Lady Mento, I am poor, by worldly standards, but I am no beggar and I am not a fool. I count myself a fitting match for any man in this kingdom.

JULIA: I do not say that you are not; far from it. But I heard even now something more about your father which makes you no match for my son.

LENDA: And this something you have kept as a trump card.

JULIA: I dearly hoped, Lenda, not to be forced to repeat it.

LENDA: You have few sins left to repeat, Lady Mento. What is the *bonne bouche?* I hope a good one. His vices are not grand hitherto. Did he murder?

JULIA: Not with a knife or poison, but by subtler wickedness. I know now that in the eyes of God he was the murderer of my sister Melloney, whose love he won and whose heart he broke

wantonly and wilfully, a few months after his marriage to your mother. Now I understand my poor sister's wretchedness and death. Knowing this, it is impossible for me to receive you as my daughter.

LENDA: Lady Mento, I am very proud of my father. He was not a normal man; I know that. He was weak, he was wicked; very wicked, if you like. I should not wonder. From the time he was born he had no help, no guidance; nothing was done for him, nothing was smoothed for him. He fought and suffered from boyhood on. In spite of all that, he was one of the best painters of his time. I say that that eminence points to greatness of soul, whatever sins he did. And I'd rather be his daughter than a crowned queen. Do not speak to me now, Bunny; do not touch me. I have been here too long. My place is with that poor woman, who is the last soul on earth who loved my father. If they will let me, I will be by her till she die. [*She goes off, Right.*]

JULIA: So, my son, we come to the parting of the ways.

BUNNY: Yes, Mother.

JULIA: Will you too go to Mrs. Trenchard's, to this cast mistress of a thief?

BUNNY: Don't hit below the belt, Mother. I haven't gone, for your sake.

JULIA: Thank you, Bunny.

BUNNY: Thank me? For failing my love?

JULIA: For not breaking your Mother's heart, Bunny.

BUNNY: The past only exists as somebody's prejudice.

JULIA: That is so, my son. Bunny, my dear, what will you do, my darling?

BUNNY: Mother, I think you'd better not talk to me for the moment, any more.

JULIA: Very well, Bunny. [*She comes towards him.*] My dear boy! My dear boy! [*She kneels suddenly and kisses his hand.*] You don't know how I love you.

BUNNY: Mother, if I did not know, do you think I would have kept silence, as I have? Come. We will not talk of this. You must rest.

JULIA: Rest? While a murderer's daughter takes my son.

BUNNY: She is not that. Do not you call her so.

JULIA: He killed my sister, after robbing her. Can you marry her, knowing that?

BUNNY: Marry her? Surely you see that Lenda will never marry me after this.

JULIA: Women are not so sensitive where their love's concerned.

BUNNY: Not sensitive? To outrage?

JULIA: Bunny, my son, this is the only shadow that has ever come between us.

BUNNY: This is more than a shadow, Mother. Why did you let her come here?

JULIA: So that I might watch her with you.

BUNNY: But why tell her all this?

JULIA: In justice to my dead sister, whom I feel to-night like a living soul, outraged by Miss Copshrews' presence here. Then from my love for you, that would screen you from the taint of that leper.

BUNNY: That leper, as you call him, kindled the souls of thousands by the purity of his thought.

JULIA: And blasted all who touched him.

BUNNY: Perhaps, Mother, that is what great motives do. They blast people. Your great motives have blasted her to the heart and me, too.

JULIA: Bunny. Bunny. That is not true, my boy.

BUNNY: It is true. You have parted us. She will leave this house to-night. Well, I shall leave it to-morrow.

JULIA: Oh, Bunny, where will you go?

BUNNY: That cannot matter, I should think. [*He goes out Back Right.* JULIA *stands like one stunned, then comes down stage blindly.*]

JULIA: When we lay them in the cradle for the first time, we know that some day this will happen. [*She goes out Front Left.* MELLONEY *comes down from Left Back.*]

MELLONEY: O blessed heaven, it is sweet to see her thwarted. She has it to the heart now. She will not glory again in her father. If I might do one thing more to them! If I might wreck these paintings, which make his fame! Then I might rest, then I might rest. [*She moves off to the Centre, down stage.*] Here is this little child. She might help me. [*Enter* SUSAN, *Right Back.*] Susan, my little one! [*She goes Left, by fire.*]

SUSAN: Ah! It is the lovely lady. Yes?

MELLONEY: Come to me by the fire here, to watch the sparks. [SUSAN *goes.*] You love watching the sparks, don't you?

SUSAN: Yes. I love it awfully much.

MELLONEY: Don't you love them when they cling to the chimney?

SUSAN: Yes, when they breathe on the soot.

MELLONEY: What do you mean by "breathe on the soot"?

SUSAN: There. When they glow out and then glow in. It's like a snake, breathing.

MELLONEY: Or like armies of little glittering men.

SUSAN: Or little butterflies flying away home.

MELLONEY: They aren't green enough for glow-worms. Do you see cities in the coals?

SUSAN: Cities all made of white gold.

MELLONEY: What a pity that we have not some salt to make lovely blue flame!

SUSAN: O, I love blue flame!

MELLONEY: Yes. Isn't it beautiful? But other things, besides salt, will make coloured flames. Shall we make some?

SUSAN: Oh, do let's! What can we use?

MELLONEY: It's such a long way to the kitchen for salt, but won't you go to fetch a piece?

SUSAN: Couldn't we make some with something here?

MELLONEY: The cover of that magazine, perhaps.

SUSAN: No, that's Jemima's. Besides, the thick paper spoils the fire so.

MELLONEY: I know what we could use.

SUSAN: What?

MELLONEY: Will you unhook that picture and bring it here? [*Points Right.*]

SUSAN: [*Unhooking* LONNY'S *portrait and bringing it.*] Here it is.

MELLONEY: That is the very thing.

SUSAN: Do you mean the frame?

MELLONEY: No, the whole thing. It's only an ugly old thing, and quite time we had a new one. It will make marvellous flames.

SUSAN: All blue and green, like salt does?

MELLONEY: Yes, and perhaps scarlet too.

SUSAN: Will it really?

MELLONEY: Yes, indeed.

SUSAN: I would love to see scarlet fire. Would it be like Fifth-of-November?

MELLONEY: Yes, like coloured flares.

SUSAN: Oh, how lovely!

MELLONEY: Well, you put it into the fire and then you will see.

SUSAN: Won't the glass break and hurt me?

MELLONEY: No; it will crack; it won't fly out. It cannot hurt you. You see that place between the two logs? Put the picture into that. Shall I give you the word? One, two, three?

SUSAN: One, to make ready.
Two, to make steady,
And three, away?

MELLONEY: Yes. And then, at "three" the lovely scarlet flames will climb all over the logs.

SUSAN: What would make it go like that?

MELLONEY: There are chemicals in the paint. Now, one to make ready. What are you waiting for?

SUSAN: No. I'm not going to burn it, if there's chemicals in it.

MELLONEY: Why not, dear?

SUSAN: Peter put some chemicals in the fire once. He set the house on fire.

MELLONEY: But these are not like those.

SUSAN: They might be. You can't ever tell, with chemicals.

MELLONEY: I can tell, my darling.

SUSAN: Father said, "No one can tell." He said, "We might have burned ourselves to little white bones."

MELLONEY: I will not let you come to any harm.

SUSAN: No. You put it on the fire.

MELLONEY: Ah, child, would that I could! There was a little boy here once who burned some pictures for me, in the other room. They were just like these pictures. They burned all up. They were not dangerous.

SUSAN: And were the flames lovely?

MELLONEY: Lovely. The loveliest flames I ever saw. The loveliest that ever were on this earth. But nothing to what the flames of these would be. You're not going to be outdone by a little boy, are you? I thought you were braver than that. Come, my darling, we'll burn the two pictures together. [*She moves to her own portrait.*]

SUSAN: No, no, no! You shall not burn my lovely lady. That's wickedness, awful wickedness. We might both be smitten dead, for burning you.

MELLONEY: Dead . . . smitten dead . . . Why?

SUSAN: Because it's a holy picture. You are an angel, Peter says. You are an angel, aren't you?

MELLONEY: No, my beloved one, I am very, very far from being that.

SUSAN: Then why did you come to me when I was ill-in-bed?

MELLONEY: Because your father wanted to marry me once, Susan. That couldn't have been, of course. But you might have been my darling little daughter if it had been. I shall always be tender to you because of that.

SUSAN: Aren't you tender to Peter and the others?

MELLONEY: They cannot see me, as you can. They have not the power.

SUSAN: But how can you go to the shiny place if you aren't an angel?

MELLONEY: I do not go to any shiny place, Susan, and the crowing of the cock is terrible to me. And I live here.

SUSAN: Yes, I know. But why don't I always see you?

MELLONEY: I cannot always come, except at midnight.

SUSAN: Because that's treasure time.

MELLONEY: There is no treasure here, my darling Susan; only old sorrow and old sin and old despair.

SUSAN: Oh, lovely lady, don't cry! I'll give you a whole kiss if you don't cry. I'll give you a kiss and a hug, and my Teddy bear Ed-a-ward.

MELLONEY: I'm not crying, darling.

SUSAN: You're the beautifullest lady. I want to say my hymn to you.

MELLONEY: Ah, little one! I am cast out from where they say hymns. But would you do something for me?

SUSAN: Oh, you know, you know I would! Anything in the wide world.

[*Enter, very quietly,* KEZIA, *at Left Back.*]

MELLONEY: Will you throw crumbs on my window-ledge, so that I may hear the little feet of the birds?

SUSAN: Is that all?

MELLONEY: No. If you could bring me snow-on-the-mountains, and forget-me-not, and dappled wallflowers, I would bless those holy flowers.

SUSAN: I will, I will; and Peter will.

MELLONEY: And never think of me again as an angel, Susan. I am only Melloney Holtspur, who cannot rest, who cannot rest. [*She begins to pass up Back Right.*]

KEZIA: Miss Melloney! Miss Melloney! Oh, my white flower, Miss Melloney! [MELLONEY *seems to try to answer. It darkens.*] Won't you speak to me? Say one little word. [*She seems to try to speak. It darkens.*] I'm old Kezia, my darling. [MELLONEY *vanishes.*] Oh, my Miss Melloney, come back out of the dead! Come back!

SUSAN: She can't always come, except at midnight.

KEZIA: That was my Miss Melloney, darling, that you were talking to.

SUSAN: Yes. She cannot rest.

KEZIA: "Let mine eyes run down with tears then, for the virgin daughter of my people is broken."

Curtain

ACT IV

The same

[*On the table is a bowl of forget-me-not, snow-on-the-mountains, and dappled wallflowers. Midnight: moonlight and one light Right.* MELLONEY *enters Left Front and goes up Back Left.*]

MELLONEY: Nothing but this hate like a living thing. If a bird would sing to us. Or if we could pick a flower. Or if we could begin again, like the spring. But she is coming.

[*Enter* LENDA, *Right Back. She comes on and says.*]

LENDA: Bunny. Bunny. So he is not here waiting for me. Very well. I do not stay in this house. I will leave word and go. [*She sits at table and begins to write.*]

MELLONEY: I looked like that, felt like that, wrote like that. The world is gone from below your feet. All the trust in your soul is gone to hell-fire. Now, you part of him, you have it.

LENDA: There, there is what I think of them. [*She slaps down the letter on the table, rises and comes down.*] I do not care. I do not care. I belong with the artists, not with these, these properties. [*She goes swiftly up and off Left Back.*]

MELLONEY: *Plaisir d'amour ne dure qu'un moment,*
Chagrin d'amour dure . . .

[*As she sings,* LONNY *silently enters, goes down right, and kneels in supplication facing Back.*]

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: What does this guilty one want?

LONNY: Mercy.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Had you mercy?

LONNY: No.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: You are answered.

LONNY: I want mercy for my daughter. She should not bear my sin.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: You sowed. You reap.

LONNY: Then I am in the lowest pit of hell.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: You are in the pit you digged.

LONNY: No, but I did the crime. My daughter is innocent. . . . Innocent.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: So was your victim.

LONNY: I know it. Let me burn for it. Only spare that lovely little soul.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: We cannot.

LONNY: You can, you can.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: We are powerless. You set the wheel of the law moving. It has to go on, to fulfilment.

LONNY: But she may be crushed utterly by it.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: You will see your results.

LONNY: Then I have blasted her life.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Results come home.

LONNY: Then it is all doggery and devilry and there is no God and no mercy. And we are all mad dogs, mad as hell, biting. I could make a better world.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Your power to make is dead.

LONNY: Then I will unmake, till men blow out life like a candle and there are no men born to suffer.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Your power to unmake is dead.

LONNY: Then I will unsettle. I will be a dream and a madness in men's minds until they thwart this purpose.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Your power to unsettle is dead. All your powers, save one, are dead.

LONNY: [*Quailing.*] What is that one?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: The power to suffer. You are in hell. [*A pause.*]

LONNY: I am not speaking from self, or vanity. I would not hide from her what I am. Let her know that I was the wickedest thing. Let her despise me. But let her not suffer because of me, because I cannot bear it, do you hear, I cannot bear it. I had rather be blasted out; annihilated.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: In hell, the worm is not annihilated; the fire is not blasted out.

LONNY: But the agony is, that you will not understand.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Understanding is forgiveness. You are not forgiven.

LONNY: No, but I want to save her: she is being punished for my sin and it is hell, hell, hell.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: This is hell.

LONNY: Then curses on this Life which can make such evil. May all this progress from the germ to man wither on its mud. May the moon blind it, and the sun blast it and some great blind star come down and crush it, crush it to pulp, to dust, to nothing. And let all the suns go out and the moons fall into them, and the space be empty, empty, with all of you gods and ghosts and fever and folly like the falling of the shadow of nothing. [*He seems to realise his hopelessness, and changes his tone.*

Feebly.] No! No! I am talking folly because I am in such pain. Listen. It was said that there would be pity. If I might live again, suffering what you please, would not that suffice? Would that not save her? Tell me what would save her.

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Atonement.

LONNY: Let me atone then. If one life of torment be not enough, let me have twenty lives. Let me be an artist or a woman for twenty lives, suffering day and night. Oh, what more could one do?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Atonement. [*He begins to go back into his place.*]

LONNY: Then let me suffer to the limit to spare her. Kind spirits, for God's sake let me spare her. She's not like me, strong to suffer; she's a little child. I know what I could do. Let my soul suffer in the bodies of animals forever and forever and forever; animals that are in the power of men; animals that men beat, or catch in traps, or love and forsake. [*No answer.*] Or let me be a bird kept in a cage. And see the sky through the bars. [*No answer.*] Then for the love and pity of the blessed God in heaven, tell me, tell me, set me my task of suffering!

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Atonement.

[*Silence. The* MAN IN ARMOUR *is in his place,* LONNY *is crouched on the floor to Right of table.* MELLONEY *enters down stage Left.*]

MELLONEY: Would you have spared me, Lonny, had you known?

LONNY: Yes.

MELLONEY: Some other woman would have served?

LONNY: No.

MELLONEY: It is a pity that you did not spare me, is it not? And you might so easily have spared me. You had your

wife and daughter to turn to. And if you had spared me, none of all this would have happened. You might have seen your child so happy. Now you will see her with a broken heart. Oh, it is a joy to me to see you suffer! I have longed for it for all these years. You will see her suffer and I shall watch you. Oh, you devil! I am glad of this at last. And you will cry out to her; but she will not hear.

LONNY: No, she will never hear how I repent.

MELLONEY: You repent! You are sick that you should suffer, not for the sufferings you have caused. Here is your daughter, cut even to the heart by you. Now you will know yourself.

LONNY: Melloney, by the old love between us, have mercy on her. [MELLONEY *laughs.*]

[LENDA *enters Left Back, carrying a small bag. She goes to the table.*]

LENDA: Twelve hours ago. Just twelve hours. And now good-bye. I shall not see this place again. [*She unhooks her father's portrait Right and brings it to table.*] Good-bye, Father. Father, do not think I care for what they say. People loved you. And I love and honour you. And I think you know that. I think the dead are here. Father, if you are here in death, speak to me. [*No answer.*] There is some spiritual presence here. Is it you, Father? [*No answer.*] Spirit, Spirit, I charge you to speak to me. [*Enter the ghost of* MINNIE BRACKNELL, *Right Back.*] Is there a Spirit?

MINNIE: Yes. I am Minnie Bracknell, who died in your arms an hour ago.

LENDA: Is it well with you?

MINNIE: Yes.

LENDA: My father loved you. That was why I came to you.

MINNIE: I knew that, when you kissed me. But your father did not love me. I loved him. He loved one who deserved more happiness than she had.

LENDA: Miss Melloney Holtspur?

MINNIE: [*Indicating* MELLONEY, *who advances.*] She. [*To* MELLONEY.] You were the one her father loved. I was only one who was thankful for crumbs that fell from her master's table. I am happy that I loved him. You are sad. You thought him a mad child. I only loved him, even his madness and his childishness. You could have given him everything, and gave him nothing. I had nothing to give but my good name. Yet you loved him better than I.

If you had ventured to lift one finger, he would have been yours. You did not. So he made his mad marriage and then his mad breaking from it. Bad as I was, I gave him something.

But you were his love. Your soul was set for his soul from of old, only the wheels of his life were choked.

Oh, I am happy, happy, happy, to be set free. [*Her face becomes radiant and she passes up the stage, Right.*]

LENDA: Oh, stay, stay; tell me of my father. [MINNIE *goes out Right.*] No, she is gone. She is gone. [*Runs to* MELLONEY.] What are you, there? For there is someone there? Are you she whom my father loved? [*No answer.* LENDA *leaves table and advances towards* MELLONEY.] No. There is nothing, nothing. Yet there was something. [*The ghost of* MYRTLE WEST *appears from Left Back.*] Who are you? Who are you, with the bright face?

MYRTLE: One who gave all for love.

LENDA: Myrtle? Myrtle West?

MYRTLE: I cannot speak; only thank you. Your father brought him to me. Your father was sent from God to change folk. A ship at sea at night comes in dark water. Then in-

stantly the dolphins flash and it is all fire instead of dark. So it was with your father. Beautiful fire.
[*She goes out in ecstasy, Front Left. Enter* KEZIA, *Left Back.*]

KEZIA: Miss Melloney.

LENDA: I am not your Miss Melloney.

KEZIA: Oh, Miss Copshrews.

LENDA: What brings you here at this time?

KEZIA: Hope to see one I loved.

LENDA: You find one you hate. In the morning, you will please give this letter to Lady Mento. I am going.

KEZIA: Miss Copshrews, I am an old woman who will not live to the lime-blossom. I have been called to my death this night. I have been a great sinner to you and yours. I thwarted your father here. I tried to turn Miss Melloney against him. I was bitter to you. I see now that he was not what I thought, but one of the broken panes that God's light shines through. And you are the fine spirit of a girl that, God forgive me, I tried to humble. Miss Copshrews, I ask you to pardon me. [*She kneels to* LENDA.]

LENDA: [*Raising.*] I have been by a death this night. Our hates seem mean beside that. Let us be friends, Miss Spinfield.

KEZIA: Would I could ask pardon of your father.

LENDA: Artists do not hate persons but states of mind. He has forgiven.

LONNY: I have forgiven. Forgive me.

LENDA: Father! Father! That is my father.

KEZIA: I was a bitter sinner to you.

LONNY: And I to you. That is over, then.

LENDA: Father. I am your daughter. I am Lenda. Speak to me. Will you not speak to me?

LONNY: I am condemned.

LENDA: Father . . . where is your glory?

LONNY: Where I trod it.

LENDA: Father. None of me condemns you; only loves and understands. Can my love touch you, or my prayer help you?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: He is condemned.

LENDA: Till when?

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Until atonement.

LENDA: How can one atone? Oh, speak, speak. He longs to speak, and cannot.

KEZIA: He longs: he longs for something. [LONNY *stretches towards the table.*] You long for the flowers, poor human soul. [*She takes flowers and brings them down Right to him.* LONNY *bursts into tears.*]

LENDA: My father; my father. I will share your punishment. I will bear it with you. Only speak to me. Make me be near you.

[*There comes the first crowing of the cocks and* LONNY *dims away, struggling to answer. Enter* BUNNY, *Right Back.*]

BUNNY: Lenda. Lenda, my God, Lenda, I've been waiting all night outside the Trenchards' for you. How have I missed you?

LENDA: By Fate, I suppose. I came back by the lane.

BUNNY: My God, you've thought that I'd deserted you. I could stand it no longer at last. I knocked. They told me that you had gone. Lenda, darling.

LENDA: We are not alone here, Bunny. Kezia is here.

KEZIA: Master Bunny, and you Miss Lenda, I am going trembling, in a few hours now, to the presence of my Maker. All my days I have been among the Holtspurs. I have held their babes and laid their dead and their bread has been my portion. If an old woman may be forgiven, Master Bunny, I pray that all beauty and all bounty and all blessing be upon your marriage forever [*she starts to go off Right*] and forever . . . and forever. [*She goes off, Back Right.*]

LENDA: Our marriage is less likely to happen than was thought.

BUNNY: Lenda, my beloved, I'm half mad from the want of saying this: Don't think that to-night can alter me.

LENDA: To-night has altered me, Bunny. I'm my father's child. You put him from this house.

BUNNY: I did not, Lenda: never. Nothing can change my praise of your father.

LENDA: Your mother did.

BUNNY: She is shocked to lose me, and upset by the death-bed. She will love you.

LENDA: She will not have the chance. When she put my father out, she put me. She thinks my presence here an insult to this house. It will be soon removed.

BUNNY: Lenda, my sweet, we seem caught in the net of old sorrows. Don't let them break all our hearts. Before all this I felt I'd die if you couldn't love me, but I'll kill myself if you throw me now.

LENDA: My father begged and stole from your mother's sister.

BUNNY: I don't care.

LENDA: I do. I will send a cheque for that when I have arranged. And I will trace those jewels.

BUNNY: What do those things matter? Our lives together is our task.

LENDA: Our lives together, in this house, with my father's sin rising up between us?

BUNNY: This house is an evil old coffin full of dead.

LENDA: It was he who brought the dead.
I think justice is done now. He spurned your aunt. Your mother has spurned me. So I will go. Good-bye. God bless you, Bunny. [*She turns to go out Right, but stays at table.*] This letter that I wrote to your mother, I'll tear it. It was all bitter. Tell her that I will write. Tell her, whatever my father did, I've paid, Bunny. Oh, Bunny, Bunny, I love you, Bunny. I wish I might die. There. It is at an end, now. [*She rises.*]

MELLONEY: [*Going to the Left of the table.*] Ah, no, no. You must not part from each other. Let the old sin be; it has been punished enough. I have been punishing your father in my heart for all these years, yet wanted more vengeance still. You love each other. That atones for all the old sin and wipes it away. Oh, be happy, you two young things, while it is hawthorn with you. Bunny, my beloved, give me your hand. And you, I loved your father once; no, I love him still. I give you your lover's hand. Take it from me. I will love you too, my child, that should have been my child. I will pray for all lovely things for both of you.

[*She places the lovers' hands in each other and slowly goes off Front Left. The lovers look at each other. The hiding place at back gives a click and slowly joggles wide open. Enter from Right Back,* JULIA.]

JULIA: My dears, you here? What does this mean? Yet the strange thing is, I knew that I should find you. I've had

a marvellous dream about my sister Melloney. It was as though she was at my side. She has made me see the right in this matter of your marriage. Lenda, my dear child, I want you to take my son. See, I give him up to you. Will you come into my heart, my daughter? There is room for you, my dear. [*She takes* LENDA.]

LENDA: Thank you. Thank you.

BUNNY: Thank you, Mother. [*The children come in, led by* SUSAN.]

JULIA: [*Turning to* CHILDREN.] But you, my dears, what brings you out of your beds at daybreak?

SUSAN: We've had dreams, too. Look, Peter. Look!

PETER: The hiding place, wide open. What's in it? The treasure.

SUSAN: What is it?

PETER: Drawings—paintings. Bring them to the table. Here's a portrait of Kezia. "My last drawing. L. C."

SUSAN: Give it to Kezia. She longs to have a portrait.

PETER: Lenda, these are your father's missing paintings.

BUNNY: They are.

LENDA: They are, indeed.

SUSAN: There's something else in the hiding-place. It is boxes!

JULIA: These are Sir Jotham's jewels. With a note from your father. "I pawned these and then redeemed them. Laurence Copshrews. May the House of Holtspur forgive me."

BUNNY: The House of Holtspur does forgive him.

JULIA: We will carry these things to my room, where there is a fire. [*They move off Back Right led by* SUSAN, *singing.*]

SUSAN: The hunt is up, the hunt is up,
And it is well-nigh day,
And Harry the King
Has gone a-hunting,
To bring a deer to bay.
The east is bright, with morning light, etc., etc.

[*After they are gone,* LONNY *comes down Centre Front and crouches and sobs.*]

LONNY: I flung away life and power, when I did not know what they were. Now I have neither, forever, and forever, and forever.

[*Enter* MELLONEY, *Front Left: she comes down Centre, Left of Table.*]

MELLONEY: Lonny! Lonny Copshrews!

LONNY: I do not know where to hide.

MELLONEY: [*Holding out her arms.*] Hide here, Lonny.

LONNY: I am unworthy to touch the hem of your garment.

MELLONEY: And yet you love me.

LONNY: No one can love twice. I've always loved you.

MELLONEY: And then a darkness fell upon you, Lonny.

LONNY: No darkness; a sin, my sin.

MELLONEY: We were made for each other, from of old, we two, and have been through a dark time apart. But the night is over now, Lonny. Won't you come into the light with me?

LONNY: My sin was against the spirit that makes the light.

MELLONEY: It is forgiven, by that spirit.

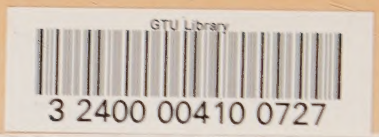
LONNY: Then I think all suffering must be at an end throughout the world.

MELLONEY: Forever and forever and forever.
[*They draw together and become transfigured as they kiss.*]

THE MAN IN ARMOUR: Another death is dead!

Curtain

Note.—The persons and events described in this play are imaginary. No reference is made to any living person.—JOHN MASEFIELD



DATE DUE

GAYLORD PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500

All items are subject to recall.

Masefield, John
Prose plays

BZ3.5
M377p

GTU Library
2400 Ridge Road
Berkeley, CA 94709
For renewals call (510) 649-2500
All items are subject to recall.

IDEAL
BOOK STORE
Good Books
Bought and Sold
1246 Amsterdam Ave.
NEW YORK